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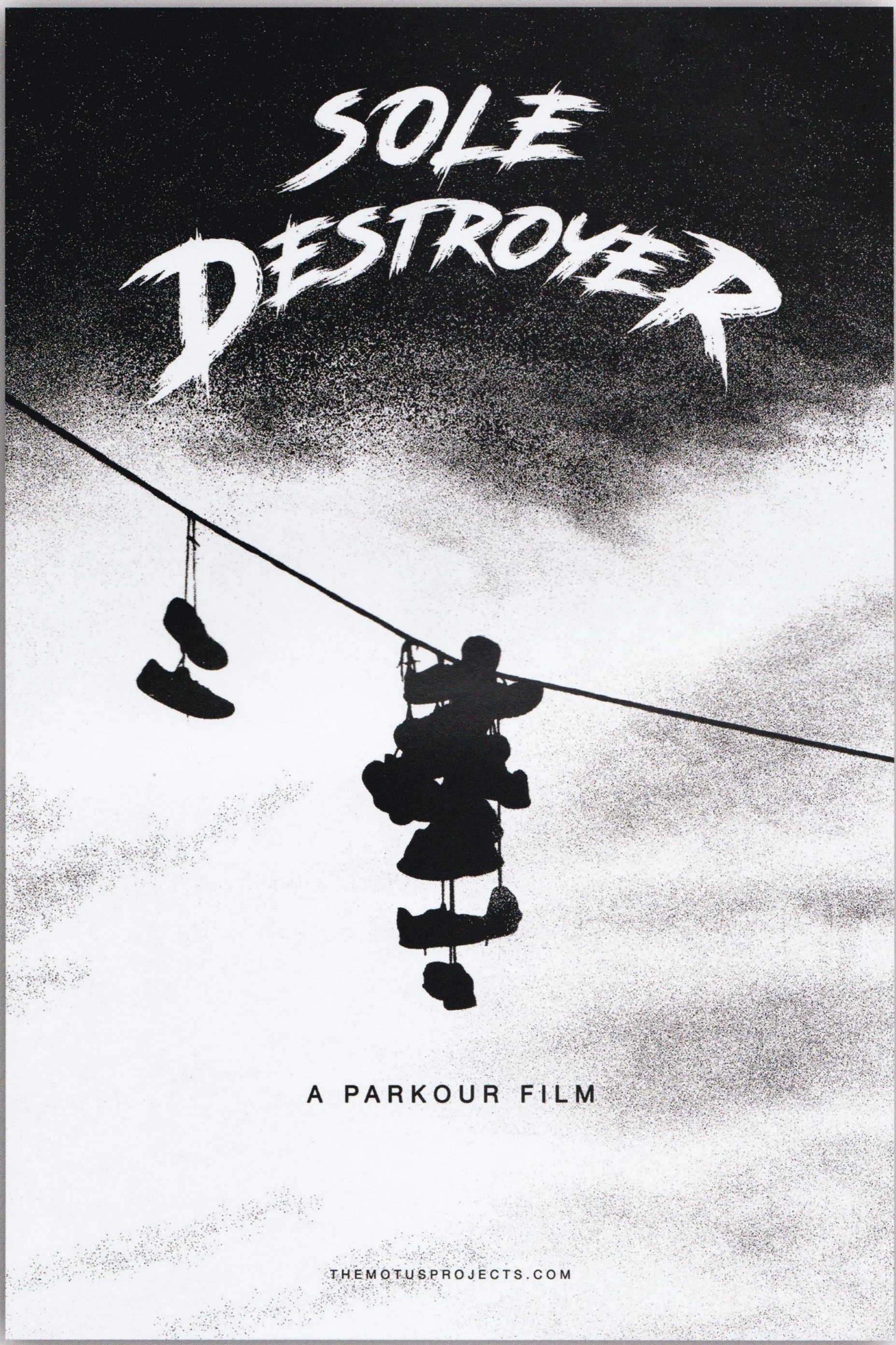
SOLE
DESTROYER
A PARKOUR FILM
THEMOTUSPROJECTS.COM

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FROM THE EDITOR

I read a comment right after the release of the Motus Projects' Sole Destroyer film that praised their work, but they were concerned that more creators within the community would start charging for their videos. Why shouldn't we? Would you go to work without pay?

What would you do if you never had to work a day in your life? In an ideal society and a utopian world, we would only do what we wanted and when we chose to do it. Imagine what we could accomplish for humanity if we spent all of our time exploring, doing, creating, and sharing the things that we love? While I wish that was our world, it's not yet, and we need to be capable of existing in this one. And if those at Motus, Storror, or we at MÜV need to spend our time working outside of parkour to survive, you'll get far less of the content that you love. If you're willing to spend money on energy drinks, putting a new pair of shoes on your feet, or going to the movies, why not support the growth of parkour as well?

Next time you see parkour content coming soon, I hope that you have the desire to pay for it. You'll not only get more but better content in the future because we can dedicate ourselves to it without worrying about whether or not we can pay rent. So, buy clothes from teams you like, attend events, subscribe to this magazine, and the next time a film comes out, buy it. Hell, buy it twice. You probably spent twice that amount supporting a Hollywood film that already makes millions of dollars. And if people are offering content for free, pay for it anyways. Nobody is ever going to believe in parkour as we do.

If you purchased this publication, thank you. You are a force that is creating sustainability within parkour for all who wish to live it. To everyone else, I hope that you keep this in mind. We live in an age where there's little money in our movement, and within a world that runs on it. So, prepare to pay for parkour.

ANDREW OBENREDER | FOUNDER

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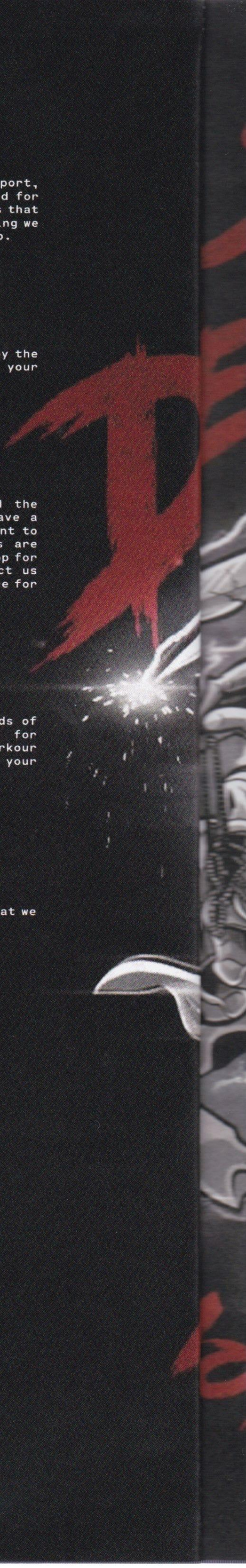

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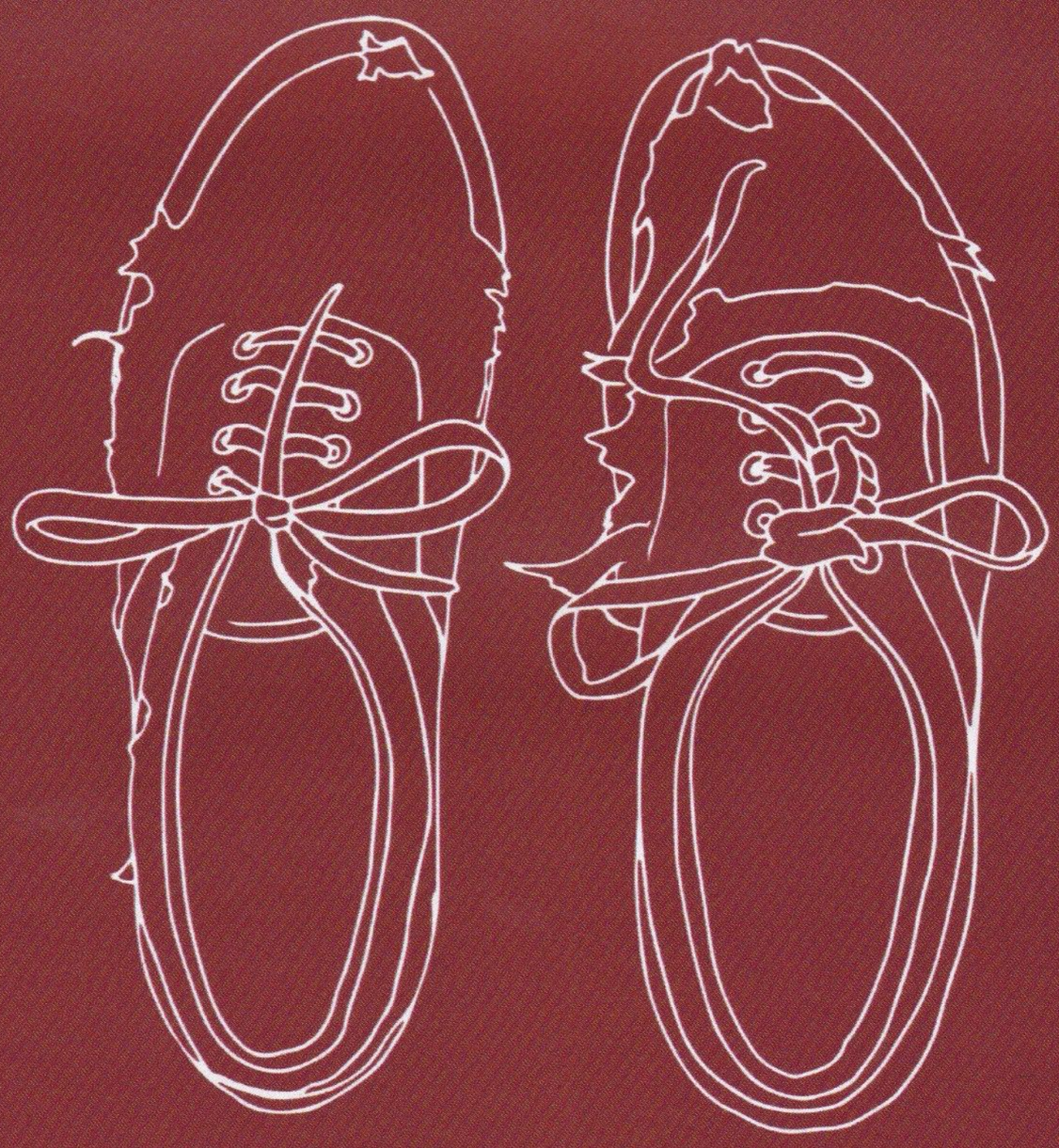

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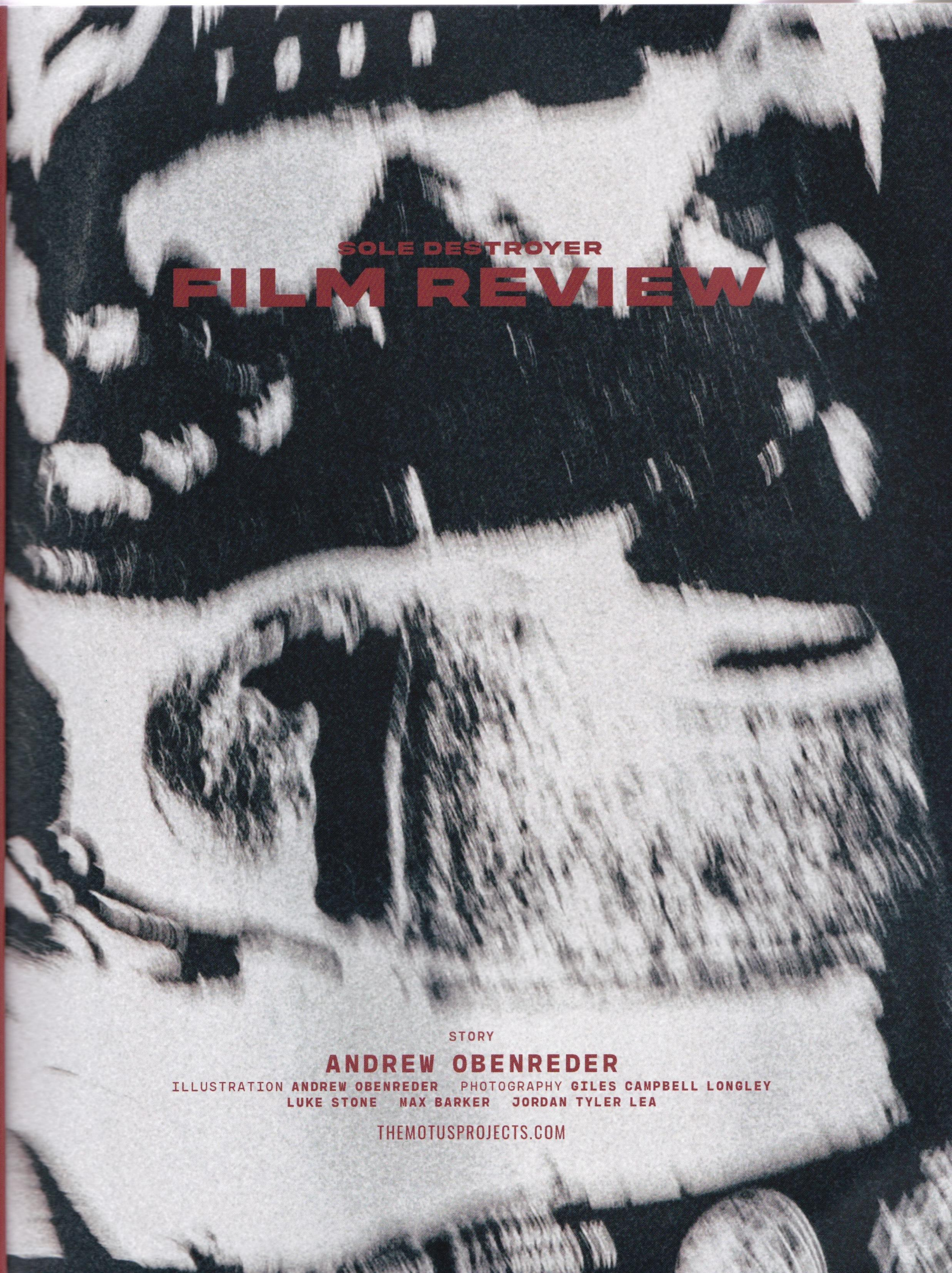
SOLE DESTROYER
FILM REVIEW
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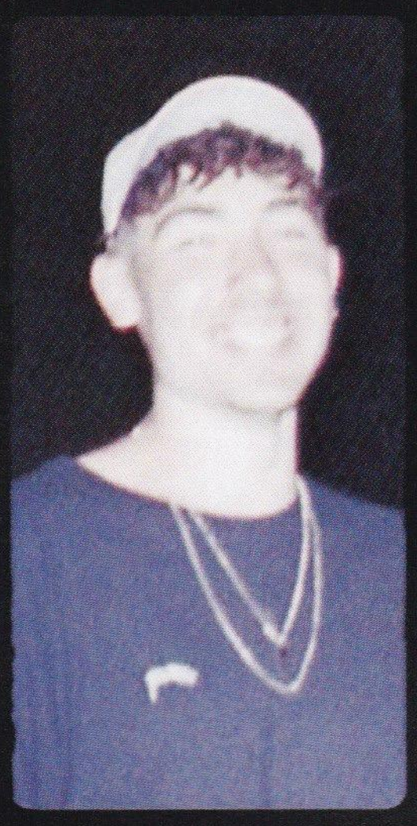
INSIDE SOLE DESTROYER

The legend of Sole Destroyer has crept in and out of the shadows over the ages. Its name whispered amongst the ears of fearful men, and it's grip, tighter than that of the Grim Reaper. But unlike those other tales, Sole Destroyer is no myth. In 2020, the Motus Projects finally released their long-awaited clothing collection and accompanying film. Like countless others, I had heard the rumors and I'm always excited to see what Giles has in the works. However, unlike the majority, I wasn't entirely convinced at first.

The legend of Sole Destroyer didn't start with Motus. Barnzy, an Australian traceur whose song was in the credits, released a song with the same title back in 2013. Countless parkour t-shirts have brandished the destroyed shoe imagery throughout the ages. While both of the past attempts lacked something in quality, the concept has been battle weathered. The SD collection is not like the others. It's a hefty one, with 24 pieces (including tops, shorts, chains, posters, and obviously, the film) and lays the other dead soles to rest. While I'm not fond of the Grim Reaper imagery and think the concept could have been more creatively realized, it's more thoughtful than previous attempts, and a far superior product than anything released. What I do applaud with this collection is that Motus Projects brought something foreign to parkour fashion - band and festival-inspired T-shirts. Creative design choices aside, the clothes themselves are dope. Whether or not you're into the style is up to your taste in threads, but we're not here to talk fashion.

Few filmmakers within parkour are capable of consistently putting out incredible work and, even fewer who have allowed themselves to go above and beyond that with which we're familiar. Now, I've never been disappointed by Gile's work. He's one of those creators that takes pride in what they create, enough to let you know that, if he has released it, it's worth a watch. Sole Destroyer isn't that-it's a must-watch, and goes above and beyond anything that Giles and Motus have created before. If you haven't seen it yet, put this magazine down, stop whatever else you're doing, grab yourself a copy, and watch it right now.

I don't have expectations going into a film but, I did hope that this would be more of a docu-film. Regardless, I was blown away by the awe-inspiring 40-minutes of action, masterfully executed with palette-cleansing intermissions.

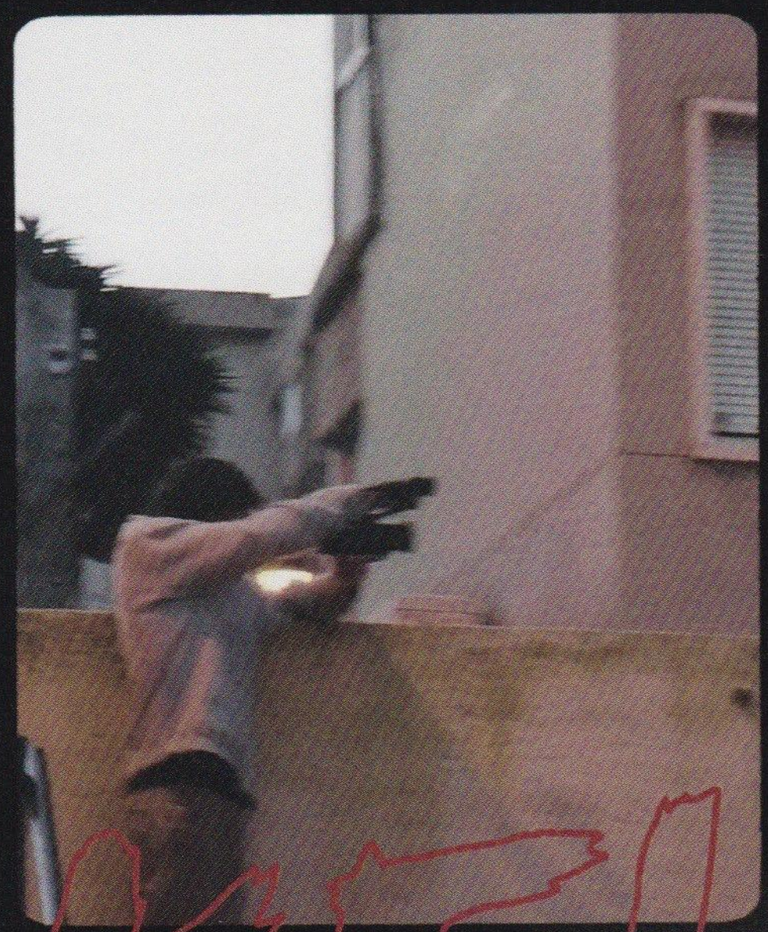


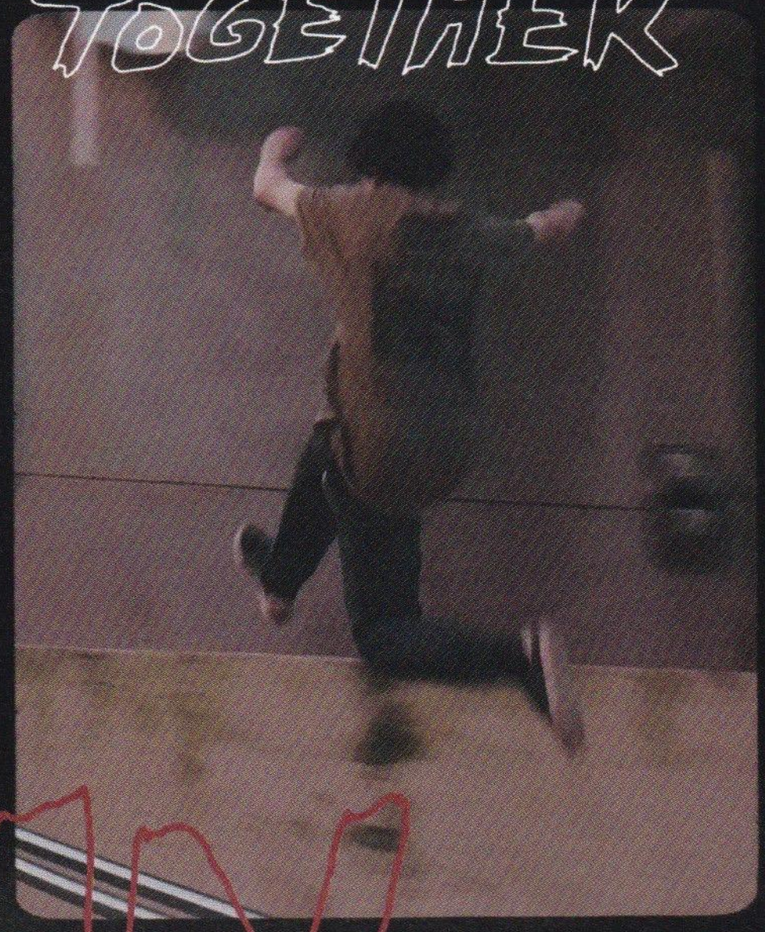
SUMMARY

The film follows the entirety of the Motus Projects team as they tour through Europe, smashing out some hefty challenges, and displays the process that they endure to execute the movement that we see. Even if you knew nothing about the group, their experiences were captured and displayed in a way that conveyed who they are as individuals and as a collective. While Sole Destroyer is very heavy in action, there is over an hour of accompanying behind the scenes footage that is useful for digging into the individual and collective experiences within the film.

37A
37

MOVE TOGETHER





I think after filming “Resurgence,” we all realized how hard we can work together, but that video was only really made up of single bangers. So when planning for SD we decided to focus on longer lines/runs which after all I think we all enjoyed more. So I think the experience and hard work put into this film shaped all our movement styles.

Sole Destroyer is all about the movement and is an incredible display of effort from everyone involved. If you haven't seen it yet, you'll be inspired to get out and move throughout the film's entirety. If you saw it, I guarantee you went to train directly after, or at the very least, wanted to.

The majority of the lines in SD are not just jam-packed, but loaded with complex and interesting movements, and break away from the stereotypical big jump, A-to-B British style. While there are a plethora of loaded jumps, there are interesting transitional elements, creative variations, and some incredible back-and-forth directional element.

Unlike the majority of mainstream parkour films, Sole Destroyer not only incorporates the process of breaking a jump that is all too familiar within our training but displays the moments that exist between the jumps. Most films that highlight the height of our movement experience don't make the space to show the world what goes behind the movement, giving the viewer a skewed reality of parkour. And while Sole Destroyer is smashed full of high-level movement, they do a great job at making it relatively accessible to people outside of parkour.

NOTABLE LINES (TIMESTAMPS):

4:03 - 4:19 - 13:04 - 17:17 - 21:12 - 21:31
- 29:38 - 35:05

CREATIVE PROCESS

When we started, we didn't have a process other than just doing what we normally do. However, after our first proper shooting period in London, we discovered some stuff that worked in regards to camera ops, filming styles, and the general workflow of a shooting day. Johnstone would normally take the A-Cam, given that he's a fucking wizard, and I would handle the pro-dad cam, which remains one of my favorite purchases to date. We would turn up to a spot, spend some time exploring it, and then if athletes feel they have lines that would fit the video, we invest the time into developing and capturing them. It unfortunately means there can be a bit of downtime for athletes not shooting at that moment. They're obviously welcome to train as they would normally, but everyone seems to fall into this collective mindset of self-preservation for the bigger stuff and also assisting with the runs at hand. Out of eight athletes, a spot might only provide runs for 3 of them, so you end up with the rest of the group helping out with ideas, morale building, photography, and other camera angles.

We kept things pretty simple. Parkour was always going to be the most important aspect so our duty when filming was to capture each line in a way that was not interrupted by flashy movement or required tones of cuts to piece it together.

GILES

adidas
Santander

CINEMATOGRAPHY

The cinematography was handled by Giles Longley and Johnstone Macpherson-Stewart. For those who have had the pleasure of witnessing some of Giles' other work, you won't even have to read this to know that the cinematography of Sole Destroyer made the film worth watching alone. The film contains a fairly decent mix of high, low, eye-level, bird's eye, and worm's eye LS and MCU tracked handheld and gimbal shots. While the shots themselves are wonderfully executed, there was a working default that was relied upon, and I would have loved to see more risk and diversity in the angles. There were a handful of times that I saw myself repositioning the camera to create more dynamic framing, providing life not only to the subject but to the environment as well. However, there were a few times within the film where this desire was executed (e.g. Kelan's line in Vigo at 21:30).

Everything else mise-en-scène deserves a round of applause as well. The locations and use of these spaces were breathtaking, and the available lighting was utilized well.

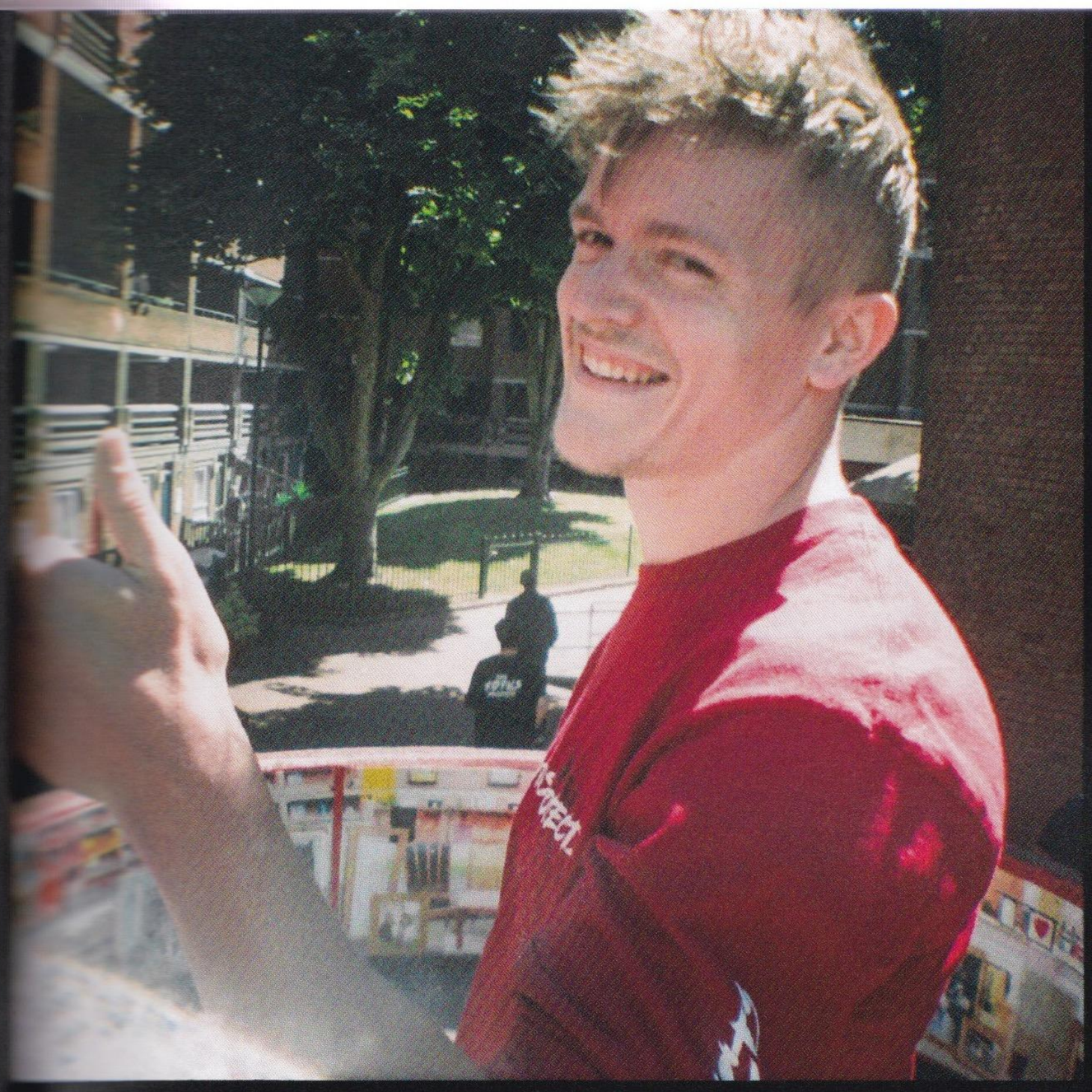
PHOTO

The usage of still photography throughout the film was an absolute viewing pleasure and helped make up for the fact that there wasn't a definitive story backing the film. The shots themselves, which were taken by Luke Stones, Jordan Tyler Lea, and Max Barker, were well composed and documented what happened outside of the project filming, which provided balance to the amorphous storyline.

In a world where we can capture whatever we desire without consequence with the use of digital cameras, it was a breath of fresh air to see a film camera involved to capture the rawness of a particular moment.

I shot on Portra 400 film and with my Olympus OM-1.

Film is more authentic. There are only 36 photos on a roll, so you only shoot when the moment is perfect. Film has colors far more natural than digital, so it was the perfect format to capture the project.



LUKE

Music

Music in parkour videos has been fairly stereotypically consistent over the years, mainly confining itself to the many flavors of hip hop and an array of electronic sub-genres such as trip-hop, downtempo, drum and bass, and dubstep. We had our post-rock phase, and a handful of select individuals have really opened the doors for variety, but we have always had our accepted defaults. However, Giles and co have repeatedly pushed the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable by the masses, and the soundtrack of Sole Destroyer is no exception.

One thing that I truly appreciated was the use of tracks straight from the parkour community including "When It's Over" by Jimmy the Giant and "Sole Destroyers" by Barnzy. While good music is good music, supporting good music created by people within our discipline is even better.

EDITING

A good cut is something hard to not expect from a Motus Projects viewing experience, and this is certainly no exception. Giles was able to take the long videos that most people complain about or rarely sit through, and create something highly digestible. The pace made it all possible.

Every so often, you'd be hit with a palette cleansing intermission or some photographic elements that would pull you from the action and send you directly back into it. This made watching a 40-minute action film feel infinitely more manageable. It's also a point that could have used more work. Almost every single one of these intermissions came abruptly post-cut to black, and I feel they could have been more varied and uniquely transitioned to with something similar to the still photo effects, invisible cuts, whip pans, or by using L/J-cuts. I also wish there was more variety with the photo/film effect breaks. Everything felt formulated, and after the first few, I knew what to expect.

My biggest gripe with the editing came in the form of replayed cuts in the action. While this can create an impactful moment (e.g. a slow-motion replay of the fattest fucking jump or a close angle of some wildly intricate foot placement), the technique is overused throughout the film. While this won't bother everyone, as we've seen this technique regularly throughout parkour video editing, it certainly doesn't create the most seamless movement experience. I would have loved to see many of these cuts transition mid-way through a move to the same movement in the second angle, creating a solid run.

While the film could have used a little more time on color correction and scene matching, the color grading was masterful. The grade had all of the beautiful things of unprocessed log footage mixed with a touch of additional contrast and cool tones.

ADIDAS

I think the only way I genuinely pulled it off was because of the pandemic and lockdown. We kept dragging the thing out and wanting to shoot more, mainly due to me being reluctant to start editing (probably just down to fear) and also a strong desire to keep capturing epic footage. After shooting in Europe, we felt like we were in the best flow of things with regards to morals and footage captured, and personally, I would have loved to have kept that moving. However, within two weeks of returning, the world shut down, so there was nothing else to do except edit. The edit was just a slog really-it never really felt too difficult-just a case of sourcing music that felt like it fit and then building out sections from there.

I was also incredibly keen to feature failure and 'walkaways' wherever possible as they're such a natural part of parkour and other sports. It's so often you see action edits that are all glory, but in reality, those athletes can't get to that level without walking away from scary shit every so often. With Max's Lisbon walkaway sections, I had this mental battle where part of me felt like I was dragging the length of the final project out, but I understood we captured this opportunity to display that moment in a very genuine light.

Initially, it was one long section, but when I separated them, it made so much sense. That's how it happens. We went there twice, and both times there was this collective anticipation of "Is he going to commit?" followed by what is just pure disappointment from not only Max but also the viewer.

The Sole Destroyer film stands on its own in an era where social media is destroying the human attention span, leaving people unable to sit through 10-minute videos on YouTube. The project itself is another testament to their mission of supporting community growth through the opportunities for those involved and their support of artists within our community. While it certainly has its flaws, they're sliced out of the picture by what the film does well. Sole Destroyer is a beautifully executed, visually stunning, and powerful piece of work that will push you to get out and move. And after you've finished moving, you can rest in peace knowing that a small purchase helps support the growth of a movement that we all know and love. And maybe your time spent watching the film will ultimately lead to something greater for those involved- something beyond fresh soles to be destroyed once more.

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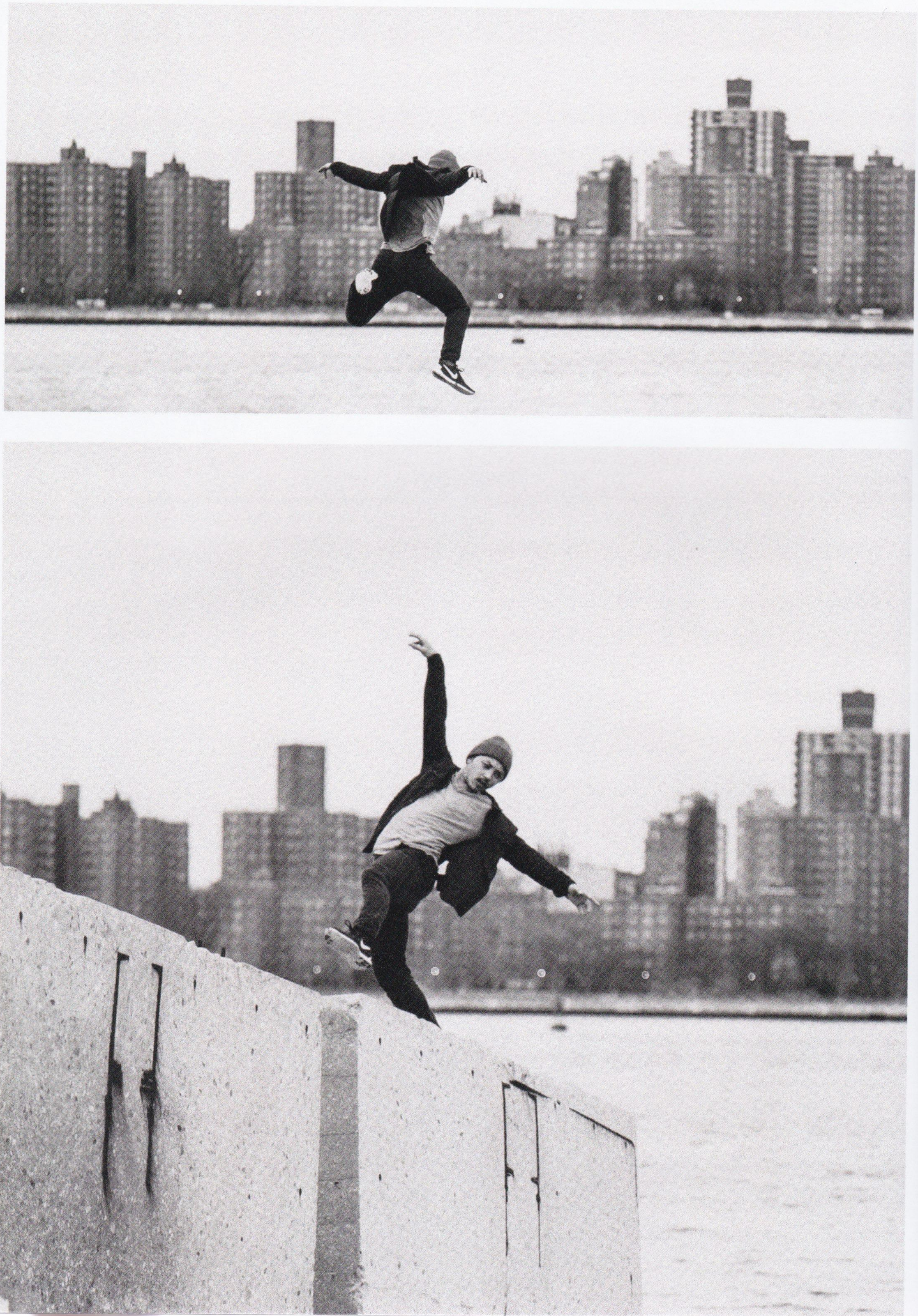
FLO TA FRESH

UNSOLICITED ADVICE
FROM
FROSTI FRESH

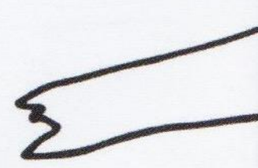
YOU AINT
DEEP
thoughts
AMOSONE

Tie your shoes even if you think it doesn't look cool. Nothing is less cool than tripping over your own shoelaces.

IF YOU WANT OTHER PEOPLE TO RESPECT YOU, START BY RESPECTING YOURSELF FIRST. THAT DOESN'T MEAN BEING OVERCONFIDENT – IT MEANS KNOWING YOUR WORTH.



Jumping and landing are both equally important, but one of them looks good in photos, and the other feels good when you're trying to walk in 10 years.



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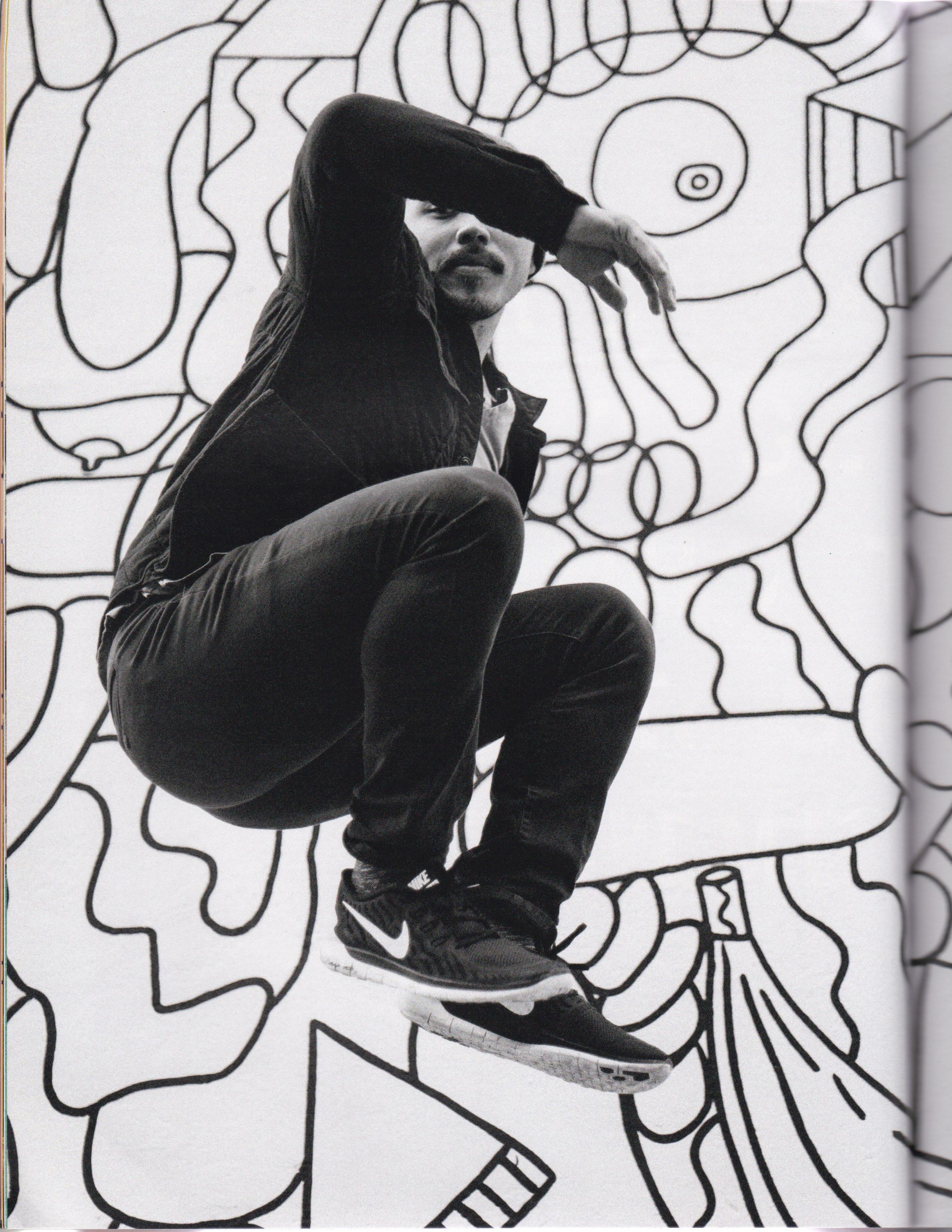

KNOWING YOUR LIMITS IS AS IMPORTANT AS BELIEVING IN YOURSELF.

STORY **MICHAEL ZERNOW** @FROSTIFRESH
PHOTO **MICHAEL MALLETTE** @MICHAELMALLETTE
ILLUSTRATION **ANDREW OBENREDER** @ANDREWMUVS

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JOSHUA MALONE

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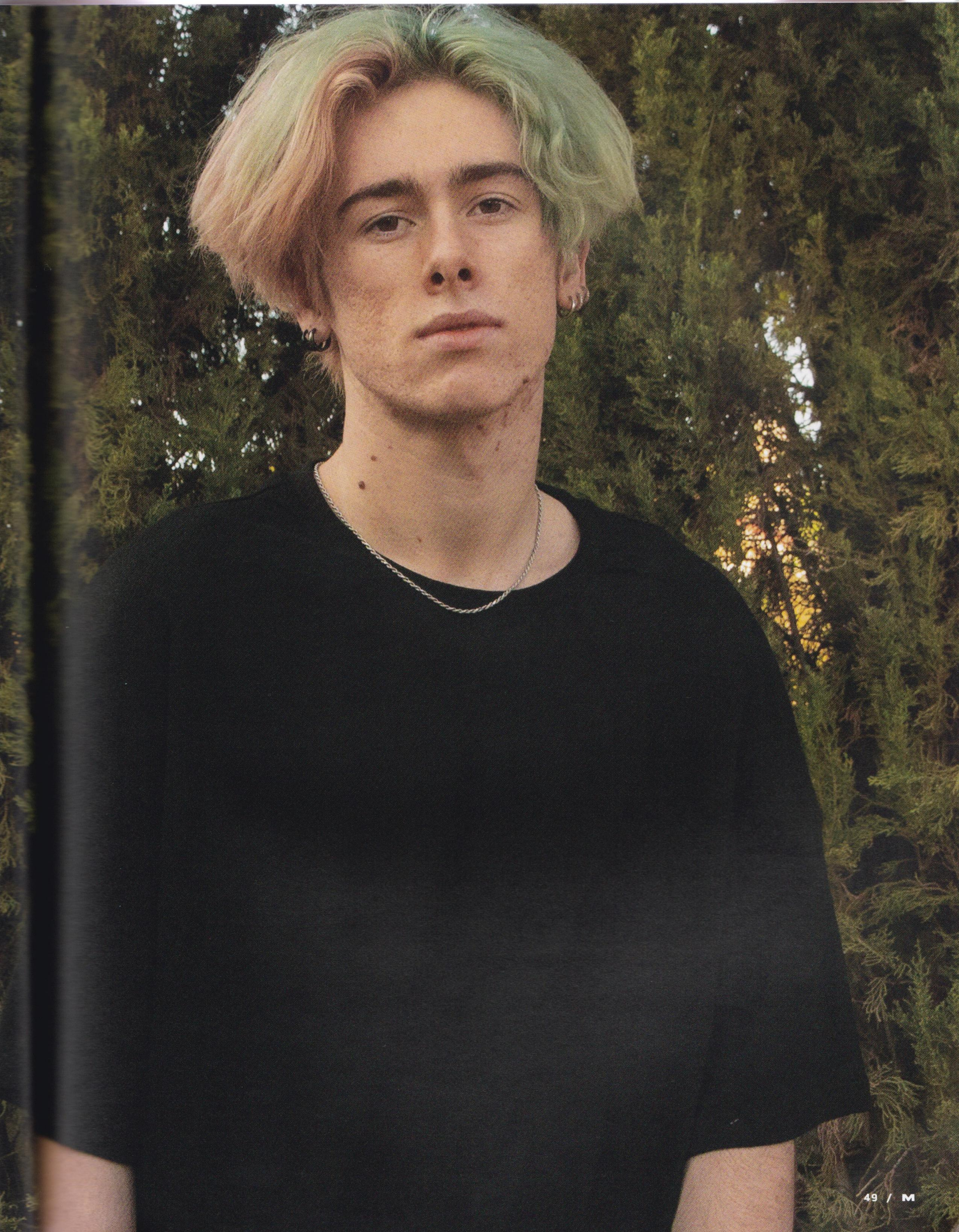
INTERVIEW
ANDREW OBENREDER

PHOTOGRAPHY
ETHAN KLICKSTEIN



WHO THE FUCK IS JOSHUA THOMAS?

15

I don't know, man.

I just like to jump on stuff. Actually, I got a fun little story. My dad said, "We'll have his middle name be Thomas, after my granddad." My middle name had to start with a J, so I could have the initials J.T. He thought that would just look sick on the back of a racing jersey. So Joshua Thomas. Anyway, I did a bunch of motorbike racing with my dad when I was younger, and then he got into an accident, so the whole family kind of stopped. Then I played video games until I realized that I liked doing flips, and I could do a front flip on the trampoline. I thought that was pretty cool. Then I found these cool trampoline videos until I was like, "Wait, let me see if I can do it on the ground." It kind of just progressed from there. I started watching a bunch of Jessie Leflair videos. Just flipping over couch cushions in my front yard and then...yeah. I guess that I've also always been competitive. So I immediately was like, "Alright, my goal: I'm trying to go to Art of Motion" or something like that. Since then, I've been focusing on having fun with my movement and trying to explore new things that I haven't done yet and expand the mind.

JOSHUA MALONE (noun) /'JUSH MELON'/

1. this dude
2. some amorphous shape

SYNONYMS: WATER MALONE

You mentioned Jessie LaFlair. Is Jessie what got you into parkour? What did your beginnings look like?

Dude, I think Jessie LeFlair was honestly like one of the first, or like Damian Walters. Anyone who was posting YouTube videos. I was never fully about what Jessie was doing, but he was always a really good person to watch, but that wasn't necessarily the style I wanted. I just liked the cool, weird flips. I remember watching a lot of Aaron Hakala. He's like super acro, and I don't do a lot of that stuff. At least in my mind, I don't know. I think that's what I want to be sometimes. Just weird bendy body that can kind of go any direction and flip around.

You do have a really really unique way of moving. It feels like you decide you want to be a shape and become it. What draws you to that kind of movement exactly?

Recently, a lot of my friends, like Ethan, and just the homies from Mass. They've always been into skiing, so I've been watching a bunch of crazy ski videos. I really like the way they think about inversion. I've just been seeing a lot of homies sending it off cliffs and grabbing their foot. It looks so sick! I've also been rollerblading a bunch now, and I want to incorporate that style into my movement more. I've always really enjoyed being fluid. I think when I first started, I was some dumb kid, I just wanted to do a front flip, and all the guys from Temecula were super purest. So, that was really nice looking back. They just made sure I had a good kong technique and knew how to move instead of just being the kid who can do a front flip. You know? Now I can do combos and everything. And then there's this one guy, Sam Deluca. Super low key. He's actually lived down the street ever since I moved into Murrieta. Yeah, he's just always been like my… whats the word... funky father maybe. Yeah.

I couldn't figure out whether or not you drew inspiration from skiing. I don't have a ton of skiing experience, but I've followed winter action sports ever since I was a kid. So I thought that you either had a skiing background or liked trickers like Rasmus Ott.

I've never skied. I honestly just got into rollerblading because I wanted to ski, but it's too hot, and I can't afford to ski. But yeah, I've been super immersed in skiing culture, going on old forums, and reading as much as I can. It's just dumb to look at anything one way. And I don't want to look at parkour as just parkour. I want to look at it as anything with any kind of influence. So I think parkour is one sport that can be anything. If someone's skiing, they're skiing. They might do like a funky thing that other skiers don't do, but he's still skiing. I feel like parkour has much more variety, and right now, we're using a bunch, but we have even more. I don't think most sports have that much variety.

I remember watching one of the videos that Ryan Kelly made with you in it, and it looked like you have a unique way of approaching your training. Very playful and explorative. Can you tell me about your process?

In the past, especially two years ago and last year, my training was very Instagram clip focused. I'd wake up, and it was all about getting that clip for the day. That was my goal, that was what I wanted to do. I think that pushed me really hard, and I got stuff done. But if I didn't have that clip for the day or it wasn't as good as I wanted it to be, it was kind of a bad day. So one thing I've learned from Ethan was just trying to go out and play. So, really that's what I try to do. I just try to go out and act like I'm a child. You know, touch walls, run around, act silly. Then eventually, from all that silliness, I'll form an idea. Then I'll add some difficulty like a big spin or something. But I think just play has been such a focus for me recently. I really like the word train. I like that we use that word a lot, but...play.

It's cool that you mentioned play and that you focus so heavily on it. In our current societal dialogue, playing is something that's missed, especially by people around our age. We are told at some point, "Hey, you can't do this anymore," and we're like, "But why, mom? I want to do this!" So what do you think kept your playful spirit alive?

Man, honestly, my friends. Just having really good friends. And I think learning new things. I think if I was still just trying to do the best double full I could do, training would be really boring. But what about a double full off of my butt? Like that's cool. Or maybe I don't dub-maybe, I just try to do a 180 but tilted. Maybe put some wheels on my feet and slide on something. That might give you a fun idea.

MELON BOY

Speaking of new things, what do you do outside of parkour and skating?

Dude, ever since I found parkour, I've only done parkour. It's kind of been a problem cause then when I'm not doing parkour, I'm just kind of at home watching TV, or something. Nowadays, it's like a bunch of stuff. I got a new car recently, and have been working on that a bunch. Which kind of sucks because I don't think I'm a car guy. Trying to learn how to day trade so I don't have to work like a normal job and just trynna watch a bunch of cool ski videos and parkour videos.

We talked skiing before-any plans to hit the slopes?

Yeah, as soon as I can. I was hoping it would be this year but probably not just because of COVID. Hopefully, next year I can go to West Mass. I got some homies out there who will hook me up. So I'll get out on the mountain.

Danny Ilabaca and I had a conversation not too long ago, and we discussed the thought that everyone in parkour was just secretly the next generation of inline skaters. Yay or nay?

Dude, yeah! I was just talking to Ethan and Trevor the other day, actually, and we made a little Instagram edit about it. But we had a bunch of pieces of plywood and like a rail in my backyard. We're not really good skaters but, we're pretty good at parkour, so maybe we can make a respected blade video. Just cause we're doing different things, you know? I've been seeing a lot of parkour people blading, and it's so cool. I can't wait to go to a jam, and then when its time to move spots, we all take out our blades and ride there like, "Yeah!"

So stoked, yo! What kind of skates do you have? What are you rocking?

The Bobi Spassov Roces Pro Models. It's so funny. I bought those because I thought they looked nice. Then I've started watching a bunch of Bobi Spassov videos, and damn, love that guy. He's like running through the streets with his arms by his side like a ballerina. That's just a steez I want.

If you're watching any skate videos, who are you following right now?

Bobi Spassov and Eugene Enin-I like that guy a lot. And Ethan just showed me Danny Beer the other day. Dude, Danny Beer is doing some funky stuff. Gosh, and then, I actually don't know his name-I only know his Instagram, and I can't even say it cause it's just a bunch of letters. But, there's one skier who is blading cause its hot out, and I like that aesthetic cause they kind of look a little different on the blades.

Is there anything that you dig video-wise outside of ski, blading, and parkour?

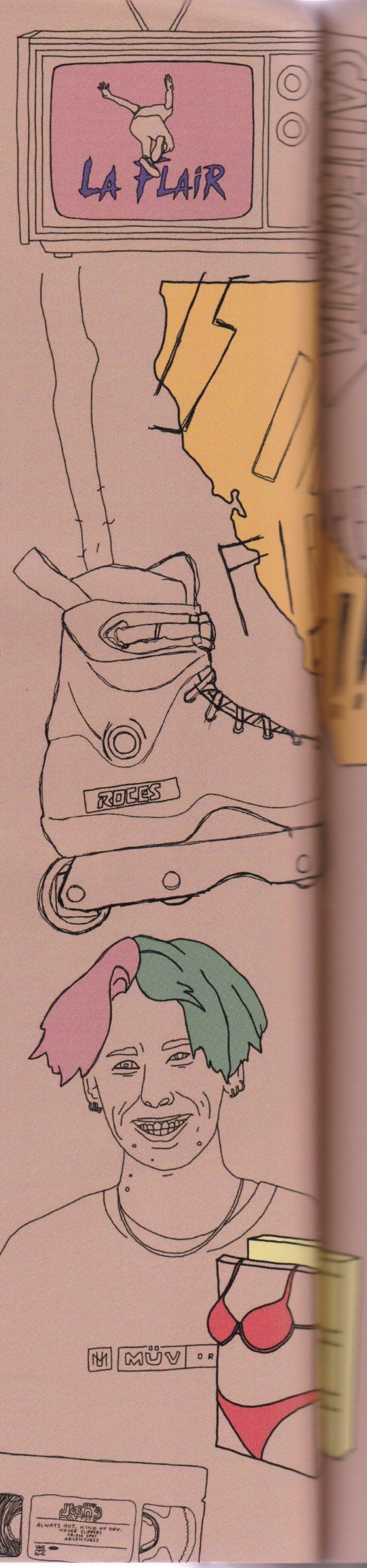
Dude, honestly, I'll watch anybody throw down. If it's a good video, if it's shot well, and if you're having fun-that's the biggest thing. If you're having fun and I can tell you're having fun, I'm having fun watching you. I love skateboard videos. I don't know if you watch skateboard videos, but I have never even tried to ride a skateboard. Like I don't know, I felt like I haven't tried to ride a skateboard for the longest time. Then the other day, I was like, "Dude, can I do an ollie?" and like, no, I can't. That's so hard. I got so much respect for those guys dropping down twenty stairs. I love the impact they take. Oof. Respect.

So, you live in California, the birthplace of skateboarding. Have you always lived in Cali?

Yeah, so I have pretty much always lived in Riverside County. I'm not on the coast, but I'm not far from it, and I'm not in any cool California mountains. I'm kind of just in the Valley. I have cool friends here, but I kind of don't like the people here. They are mostly old, they drink wine, and love Trump. So it's a weird place to be. They don't like it when I jump on their things or when I roll over them. I think a lot about if I was even born 30 minutes north. I wouldn't have been close enough to go to this parkour gym and make all these friends and then kind of go down this route I've gone. So, I'm really thankful for where I was born, and you know, it worked out. I am trying to move, and I'm thinking, Colorado-Colorado Springs.

Go to Denver! If you don't like where you're at now, Colorado Springs is the same exact shit.

Denver would be sick. Denver has always been so amazing to me cause it's just flooded with spots. I really want to go to Denver, but also Ethan is going to be in school. He'll be there for another two years. Ross Allen and then Alex Pawlus are moving back. I really want us to just all get together and create a Colorado Springs wave. Almost like wave three. There's been a couple of waves of athletes that kinda explode and then died out. Though we're not gonna die out. But yeah, every time I go into Denver or Boulder, and I'm talking about The Springs, people always say that everyone from The Springs is weird. So that makes me really excited. I think I might hate it because sometimes I don't like people, but I also might love it cause they might be super weird. Yeah... we'll see. I also got to visit the college, Colorado Springs college, or something. I really liked the vibe there. It was super chill-even just the surrounding little city. So I'm hoping to get close so that I'm close to Ethan and cool spots. And then also Denver is only like an hour away. I already drive up to LA, which is like an hour and a half-I already do that often. So I'll go all over Colorado. I'll try to build a little house out there.



You got a couple of things planned for the coming time. What do you see for yourself? I don't know if you're the kind of person who likes to look into the future, but, if you are, what do you see your future in parkour looking like?

I feel like I've always been very competition focused, and I would still really like to compete, but nowadays, I feel much less like a competitive athlete and much more of a creative artist. I kind of just want to hide my clips and not post them on Instagram until I can put out a big video that means something more than a cool 15-second post that's forgotten about 2 weeks later. I just want to go out and play and make some cool videos that no one knows about until they're like, "Wow! Where did this come from?" Like big sleeper clips.

So I remember you mentioning you had one of those in the works. Without telling me too much. What are you working on?

So right now, I have two ideas. Realistically I only have clips for one right now, but I'm still working on it. All the Bean guys, we're trying to make another video. We got lucky a couple of times. We're all kind of from different areas but were able to come together and make Eternal Sleepover cause Ethan stayed with me for a summer and then Garbanzo was cause Trevor and I went out to Massachusetts, and hung out with a bunch of the guys from out there. This next part is going to be everyone having separate sections like a classic skate video. So 3-4 minutes of me going ham, maybe some weird b-roll, then Ethan's part, Trevors part, and Zack's part. Just like an old school skate video is what's coming. Then I wanna create a sort of goodbye Temecula/ California video. There are still some challenges I want to complete before I leave, but also I'm so freaking tired of the three spots I have here, and I want to go!

So do you actually have only three spots?

I'm really a bit picky, and I could train on a lot more. I feel like a lot of the spots are just one good wall and nothing else. I get three boxes that are well-positioned, and that's pretty cool, but at the end of the day, those are three ledges, and I can only do some ledge moves and then flat ground moves. Yeah, I don't know. I'm always looking at clips from Ethans daily, and I'm like, "Dude, what the hell are you training on? I'm trying to go get WIERD, and I can only do that with the one wall." I definitely am picky with spots.

So how has your relationship been up until this point with these three spots been?

Pretty good, I mean. They are always there for me. They're always hot, but that means they're always kind of dry. I never really have slippery walls. That's cool, but there's never shade.

That's as a good spot relationship should be, or I guess any relationship. Depends on what you're into. So, you mentioned Temecula's gym a couple of times, and I figured you grew up around the community there. How has the community there been for you?

It's kind of also just always there. I remember going to my first jams before the community had a gym, and it was a bunch of these kids who pretty much just got out of high school and then me, a twelve-year-old just jumping at a park. That grew into some of the older guys getting smarter and being able to own and build a gym. Then I'm going to that gym, and then I'm now working for that gym, coaching there. There's always been a good spirit here in Temecula, and now we have like a second gym open. And I'm gonna throw some shade on all the Temecula people if anyone is listening. All the old Temecula people who I grew up with training need to train more. They're doing better now, but they're all falling off, and it just makes me sad.

It happens, but why do you think they've fallen off?

Not even in the sense that they've stopped training. I think that some of the ones who I want to train with are focused on owning a business instead. It's not even like owning a parkour business-it doesn't feel like you're thinking about parkour still. It feels like you're just thinking about owning a business. So instead of thinking about what we can do for the community, it's like, what can we do for the white moms who keep us open? They need to drop their kids off and then go have their wine.

What was it like working with Freedom In Motion?

Honestly, especially last year, things really got heated, and I got to go to NAPC and AOM. It was like a dream come true because I was also coaching at the gym, which was a fun job, and a great way to make money. I would talk to the owner and be like, "Hey man, I'm trying to go to Canada and compete in this, can you pay for me to go? I can maybe chip in a little bit." And I'd get, "Yeah, dude. Wear a FIM t-shirt and enjoy yourself." That was just what I was working for and training within my mind for so long. It was a dream come true to do that.

That's a beautiful thing to hear. So being that we've got an interesting and very open-ended future ahead of ourselves with MÜVMAG-if we could do anything together, what would it be?

Obviously, I want to make some dope ass videos. Then I also want to try to do like a coaching tour next year or whenever things die down. I feel like I have a lot of knowledge that isn't necessarily new-especially in the skiing world-but I feel like I can teach people to look at moves in a different way that makes it easier or makes a difference. I'm just trying to teach and show and do cool shit.

PHOTO **WOUTER DE MOL** WOUTERDEMOL.BE @WOUTER_DM
FEATURED **NICO VAN HOLE** @NICOVANHOLE

PHOTO **WOUTER DE MOL** WOUTERDEMOL.BE @WOUTER_DM
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XCOVER

-

JULIEN BLANC

URBEX

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BELGIUM

This power plant in Charleroi was built in 1921. Upon its completion, it became one of the largest coal-burning power plants in Belgium. By 1977, the power plant and its massive tower was the primary source of energy in the area. Eventually, it was closed in 2007, and since then, it has become a popular location for urban exploration.

PHOTOGRAPHY **JULIEN BLANC** @JULIENB.VISUALS

FEATURED **XCOVER PROJECT** @XCOVERPROJECT **JOEL EGGIMANN** @JOEL_EGGIMANN

THE MOST POWERFUL BEING

CALEB IULIANO

I think that I'm a little bit different than a lot of people that I train with. They're coming up with really creative stuff that I don't do that much of or trying to put together creative lines. But when I go places, I want to find the hardest possible challenge to do. I walk into a spot, and I'm like all right, what is impossible here? That's what I want to try. That's really what drives me. I'm not that creative, and I don't do a lot of acro, but I like finding super hard stuff, trying to break my limits, and doing them.

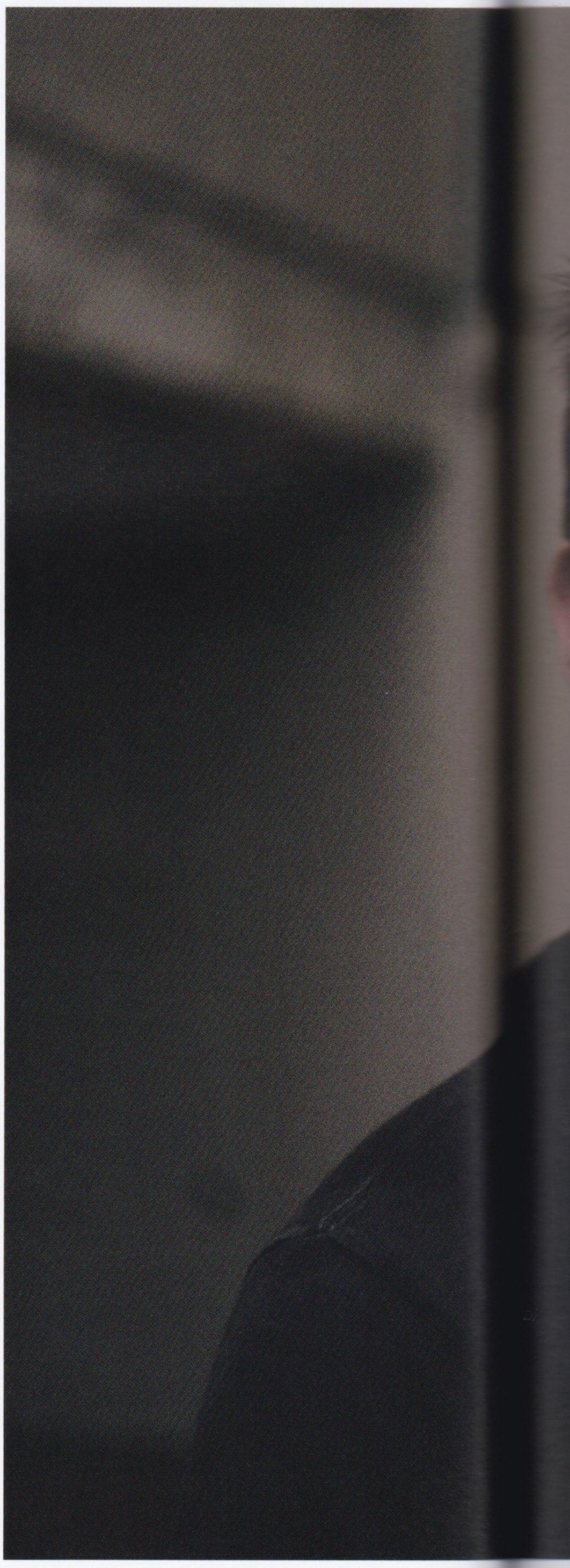
I just want to be the most powerful being that I can. I'm trying to surpass myself all of the time, so I just find things that are further than I can jump. Like I'll find a jump that's at my limit, and I'm like, this is beyond my limits - I have to be able to do this so that I can ascend to the next level. I'm pretty much just trying to be an anime all of the time. You know, just trying to get my limit breaker. It just makes me happy when I do really hard stuff. It's what's most fulfilling for me.

I spend a lot of time strength training, and I train parkour just about every day. So I've spent over a decade now just taking impact all day every day, which general society will tell you that's terrible for you, but I think it's what keeps you young. You take a lot of impact, your body adapts to it, you get really strong, and you adapt to being able to do that all of the time. If you don't do it, you'll sit around, get frail, and break whenever you take impact. So I train parkour and lots of heavy impact stuff all of the time, but I also strength train all of the time. So I have a 400lbs squat, my deadlift is close to 430 or 440 or something, and I built that up over time. And I think it helped my body be able to take all of this impact.

A lot of times, I'll be training with people in their early 20s, and we do the same type of stuff. Like we'll do a drop pre or something, and I barely even absorb, like I land, and it barely phases me. And I see younger guys completely bottoming out, they'll take a lot of impacts, and it hurts their knees and it feels like their bodies are breaking down in their early 20s. But I think that the only difference is that I strength train so much and it made my legs so much stronger. Even going into my 30s, I don't feel anything when I take drops. I take huge drops all of the time, don't feel anything. Don't really feel anything in the big plyos, strides, or bounds that I do.

Challenges call to me, but some of them do, and some of them don't. So I'll see one but won't really care about the challenge very much, and I won't even feel like trying it. Some challenges will kind of resonate with me, so I'll try a few times but won't care if I get it. Then some challenges, which are usually the big power challenges, like really hard plyos, strides, and big jumps that push me to my limit. When I see those, they resonate with me so hard that I have to do it, or my soul won't be complete. Once I feel something resonate with me, it just has to be done.

It's just a lot of strength training, deep ranges of motion, and of course, power and speed stuff when I'm trying to peak out my jump and get explosive and jump far. Before you can do that, you need to build a strong foundation. Before you can do some peak stuff, get your jump massive, and become super fast, you got to be strong enough to handle it all.



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RESERVED
PARKING
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PRESS X TO PARKOUR

BRYAN AUSTIN

ASSASSIN'S CREED IS A TRAVERSABLE OPEN-WORLD LINKED TO OUR FAVORITE PASTIME, BUT THE SERIES MAY NOT DO OUR MOVEMENT JUSTICE.

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 13, 2007
GAMES IN SERIES: 11 (MAIN), 9 (SPINOFFS)
PLATFORM: ALMOST EVERYTHING

Assassin's Creed hit the shelves on November 13, 2007, quickly becoming popular enough to spawn yearly sequels. The series chronicles a futuristic story in which various secret organizations use animus machines that allow certain users to relive their past ancestry. In doing so, they can gain valuable lost knowledge and artifacts that can help them in their constant struggle for power in the future. This is an interesting, but sometimes overly convoluted premise, that mostly works to the advantage of the series, as its primary goal is to allow each game to take place in a different time and location. These times and settings range from the holy lands in 1191, 1400s Venice, Boston in the 1800s, and many more between. They've all been beautifully rendered into fully open-world environments that the player may explore as they please. Historians have been quoted to praise the accuracy of these environments, from the way they look to the story's political relevance. This is the heart of Assassin's Creed. It's an open-world, and your ability to traverse and change it has always been linked to our favorite pastime, parkour.

It never ceases to amaze me how many people this game has inspired to look into parkour. I'm sure everyone knows or has known someone whose first interaction with parkour was the Assassin's Creed series. Casino Royale and its famous opening scene had come out the year before its release and had sparked the idea of what parkour was in the minds of millions. And if Casino Royale was the spark Assassin's Creed was a jerry can of gasoline poured directly into your little gamer brain. It's popularity subsequently led to a rise in the popularity of parkour in the video game world, which helped to make the practice of parkour a household name for teenagers around the world.

Many of the Assassins Creed's gameplay decisions have become staples throughout the gaming industry. Direct comparisons can be made to most of the popular titles in the years following its release. Mirror's Edge came out a year after AC, further embracing the parkour inspiration while taking a 1st person perspective. In 2009, Infamous took the idea of parkour and added super lightning powers to the equation, letting you fly around and stick to walls. Followed soon after was Prototype. It did what Infamous did but in a much more destructive and over the top manner. The character even looked suspiciously like Assassin's Creeds' main character. Even Batman took some cues. While Arkham Asylum doesn't utilize a lot of parkour movement, the combat system is just an improved version of Assassins Creeds combat, which focuses heavily on countering and parrying attacks. Assassins Creed conceptualized the idea of an assassin hiding in plain sight and then sliding back among a crowd to elude detection. In recent titles, this has been mostly forgotten. But this idea was also utilized in the HITMAN series, which recently embraced the concept to a greater extent.

But what is it about Assassins Creed that has made it as popular as it is? Well, in each game, you play an assassin whose main characteristic is their ability to maneuver through their environment and blend into crowds with ease. This makes them particularly adept at reaching their targets, assassinating them, and then leaving without being noticed. The freedom and elegance of movement are what sets this game apart from others of its time. The game's predecessor, The Prince of Persia, provided fairly limited choices when traversing obstacles. Their challenge was more so in line with pressing the correct buttons at the correct time to jump to the next platform. Now in AC, you can simply hold down a button, and your character begins to run, jump, and climb through their surroundings to go wherever you point them. Whether it's a steep wall, a 15-foot leap, or an iconic swan dive into a hay bail 100 feet below, Assassin's Creed protagonists all move through their environments with stunning fluidity and grace. All of this is done in a fully rendered open environment emphasizing the choices the player has to choose from. On top of that is the unique white hooded design of the main character made to look like monk robes that would fit into the surroundings of the time, which would later just become a traditional outfit for the assassins. These elements drew the attention of many gamers who would aspire to become silent, climbing assassins themselves.

Initial installments of the game were far denser in their level design. Bustling cities filled with merchants and townspeople. Buildings in constant disrepair, with scaffolding and supplies laying around the streets. Traversing the rooftops and vertical movement felt like a necessity for anyone needing to get away from prying eyes. This fundamental design choice made parkour a crucial element of the main character and his clan's methodology. Without it, how else would anyone navigate such labyrinthine streets? More recently, iterations of the game have had a drastic shift in their focus. Hiding and ducking into crowds to take out specific targets has changed into taking out small camps of enemies throughout an open world. Stealth is an option, but it feels as though it's being pushed aside to make way for a more combat-focused game. This shift has had a fairly large impact on the overall design and feel of the game. The rooftops which used to feel like a vital part of how the character moved in their environment have been stripped down and spread out across a much larger area. Climbing and jumping around has become a less essential part of the game, and in many cases, they don't even explain how your character acquired the ability to do so proficiently.

It seems as though not a year can go by without at least one new Assassin's Creed title. And considering the size and scale of each game continues to grow, it makes sense that every title can't reinvent the wheel. Sadly instead of improving upon the flaws in the movement that made the game popular, Assassin's Creed developers have always chosen to go different routes. AC2 and its sequels improved on the open world and quest variety, which helped with the tediousness the original game had. AC3 and 4 added ships and boat combat which was refreshing for the series but was still just a distraction from larger issues. Then came a long dredge of AC titles that added gadgets and gizmos to help you kill your targets, most of which felt like gimmicks that made the game too easy. Many of the animations were improved along the way, making the game look better, but the feeling was the same. And now we're at AC Origins and Odyssey, games that have further improved combat, added loot, and leveling systems, and expanded the map sizes to an exorbitant amount.

Over time, lack of focus and its rapid development has brought out many of the games former flaws. Movement, though crucial, has always been very simplistic and lacks precision and depth. Holding down a button and moving in a direction will contextually allow your character to move and climb more quickly in that given direction. The problem is that often times, your character will go rogue and jump off in the wrong direction. This will always happen at the worst time and usually results in a lot of frustration. As you try and make your character jump up a wall that you know they can easily make, they'll instead bounce off, drop to the ground, alert the guards, or die.

Adding a lot to a game might always sound like a better thing, but I've always felt that Assassin's Creed is a series that has needed trimming in some places. What good is an immense open-world if most of it is barren forests and canyons without much to interact with? Leveling up your character sounds great until you spend time sneaking up on someone and find that they're a few levels above you, and getting stabbed in the back does not affect their health bar. I don't play Assassin's Creed to not be able to assassinate people. Loot and leveling would be fine if modern games didn't use them in such a sleazy way. Adding microtransactions to level up my character and their gear defeats the entire purpose of playing the game in the first place. All of this has subtracted time and energy from developing what made the original games so fun.

With an expanded open-world, you might expect more movement options. Other games seem to understand that open worlds are more enjoyable with more ways to move around them. GTA has cars, planes, and other vehicles of varying sizes and speeds to accompany its world size. Batman and Zelda BOTW allow you to glide around freely without restrictions. Even Final Fantasy games give you the ability to fly after completing most of the story. These games become better with more movement and control, which is what made Assassin's Creed unique and fun originally but has been foregoing ever since. Give the assassin a grappling hook or a way to glide around. Give them something more than a horse that ends up restricting your climbing abilities. Without improvements in traversal and level design, these games become stale very quickly. We need more than just the single parkour button.

So many games seem to fall into an overambitious trap that leaves them in a jack of all trades situation. Every game needs stealth, several styles of combat, levels, loot, an open-world, crafting, dialogue trees, amazing graphics, and so much more. All of this has to be bigger and better with each passing game. But all of this has to be done with one controller with only so many inputs. This leaves us at a bit of a disadvantage when it comes to control, as many functions are placed on a singular button and become contextual. What used to be a sprint or run button has now become the all-inclusive parkour button. A button that switches your character into movement mode, instead of combat mode. And where it might be entertaining to see "Hold R2 to Parkour" in the new Spiderman, it's just a minuscule element in a much larger game focusing more on web-swinging and fighting bad guys. Even worse is in Watchdogs 2, where your character flips off ledges sometimes when they feel like it while holding the button. It makes parkour feel a bit like a gimmick in a game that focuses much more on hacking the environment around you. Not that any of these games are bad by any means, but if you have less control over your character's movement, it becomes more difficult for me to associate the games with parkour, despite them boasting its inspiration.

Holding a parkour button only seems to be a problem in the 3rd person perspective. 1st person games like Mirror's Edge or Dying Light seem to have no problem allocating controller space to more movement functionality, allowing jumping, crouching, wall running, and diving to feel more tactile and precise. It's crazy how Mario, a series about a jumping plumber, has a better control scheme than any of the other 3rd person platformers, despite never flaunting its parkouriness. This is all I'd like to see in newer installments of Assassin's Creed. A rework to how your character moves, adding more input to allow for more precision.

In its current state, and from what I can see in its foreseeable future with AC: Valhalla on the way, it's becoming harder and harder to see it as the game that helped solidify parkour into the mainstream. Assassin's Creed has and may always be the first game that people think about when you bring up parkour. But ironically, in its chase to follow modern trends, the series has left parkour behind along with many of its other more unique ideas. I still wholeheartedly recommend playing one of them if you've never picked one up before. But the games seem to have peaked at AC2 and have never given themselves enough time to develop beyond that. The series still has a lot of potential, and I hope that soon it will reevaluate its fundamentals and its roots in parkour.

STORY BRYAN AUSTIN
FOLLOW **@NOKNOWNTRUTHS** **@UBISOFTMTL**

PHOTOGRAPHY **JULIEN BLANC** @JULIENB.VISUALS

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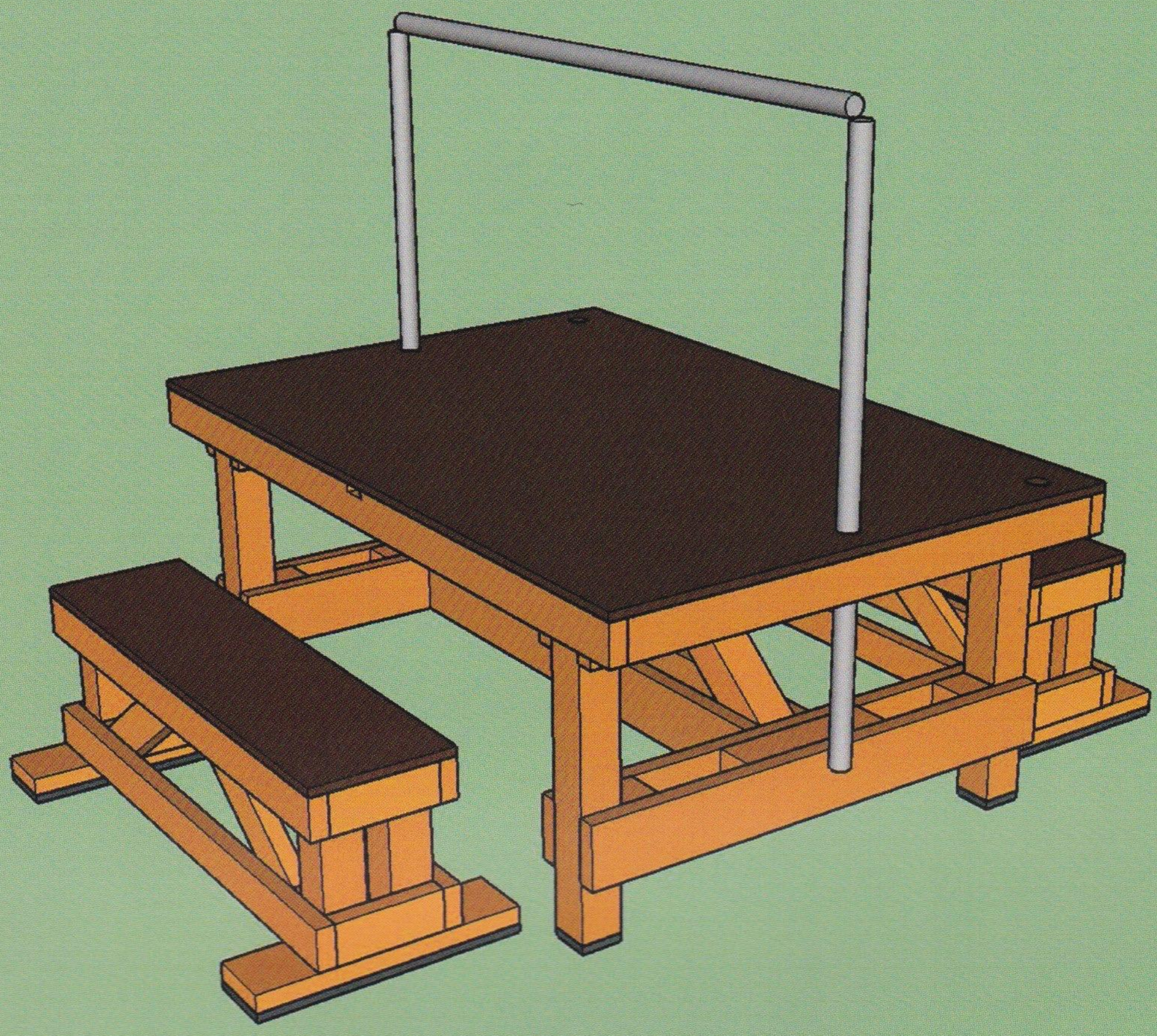
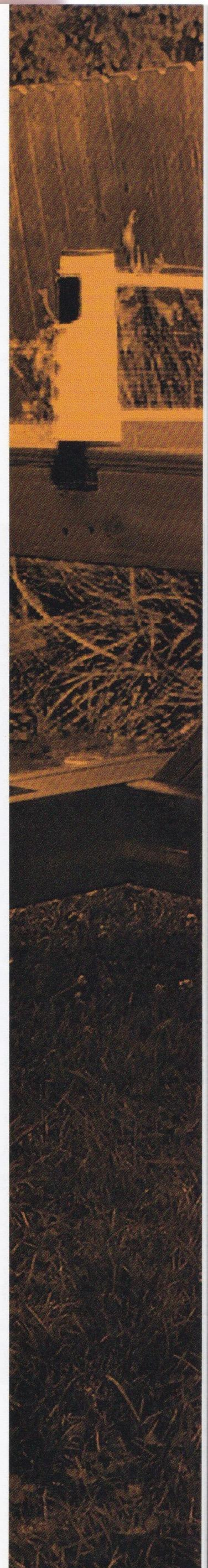


P^3 TABLE

PARKOUR / PING-PONG / PICNIC

JEFFREY NOETHE

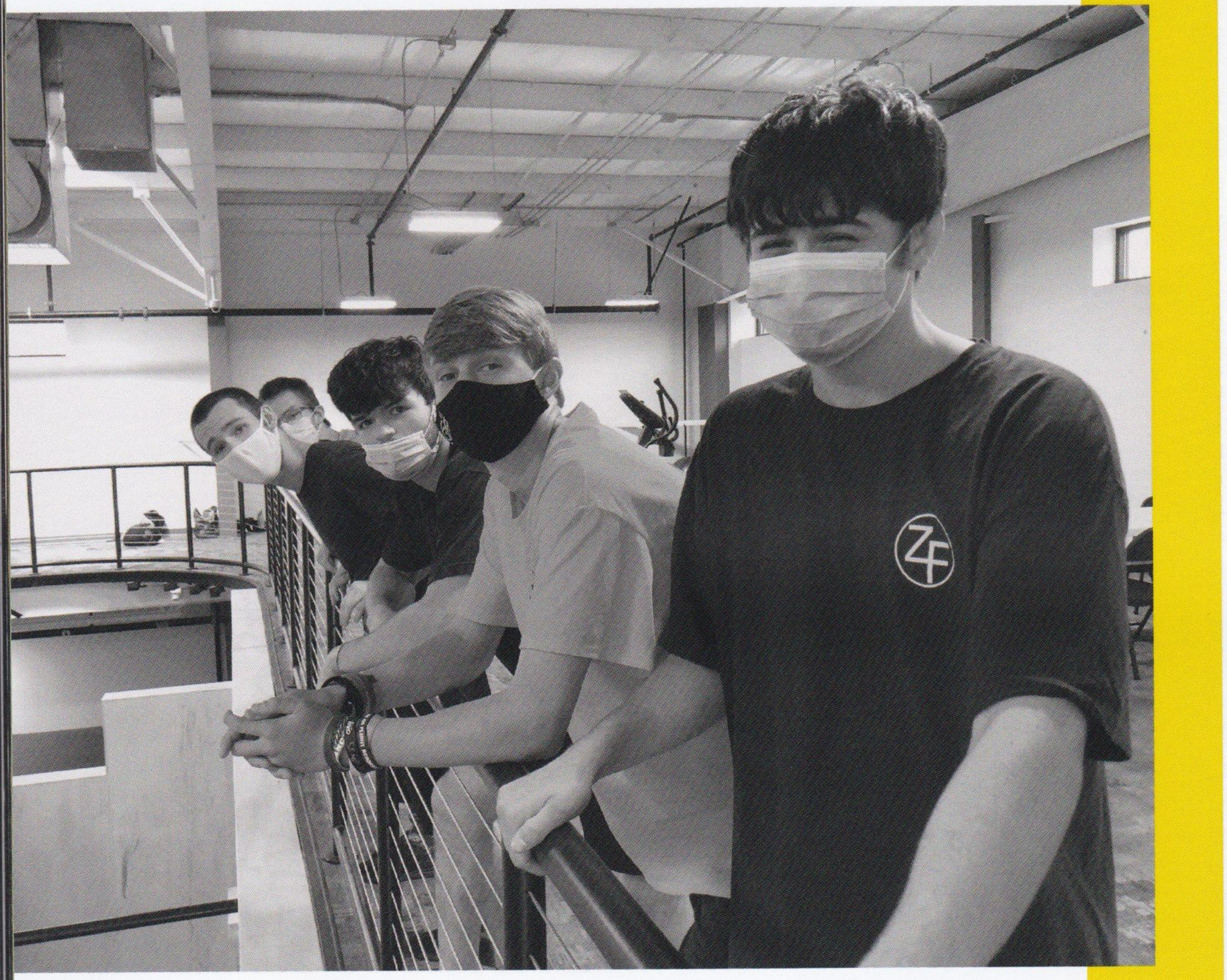


I've wanted a home parkour training space for years, but our yard is quite small, and our garage storage is even smaller. One thing already taking up yard space was a wrought iron table and chairs (useless for parkour), so I decided to replace them with a picnic table. I thought this would be simple, but I quickly found that even the sturdiest wood picnic tables aren't designed for parkour-level abuse.

I started working in SketchUp to create a table that would be equally useful for both eating and training. I also wanted it to look good, more like a piece of furniture than a piece of gym equipment. Along the way, I added other functionality, like a ping-pong net, storage baskets, and umbrellas.

The final product is built from 91 separate pieces of cedar lumber and marine plywood. The table weighs 200 pounds, but with 5-inch caster wheels, it can be moved by one person, even across grass. The galvanized bars can be mounted in two positions and at a range of heights, and the bar holes can be easily plugged when not in use. When I eventually invest in vaults and a bar structure, I expect that this table will remain a useful component in our home parkour training space.

JEFFREY NOETHE is a 50-year-old Psychologist in Portland, Oregon. He regrets that he only discovered parkour five years ago, but he is making up for the lost time by training at two local gyms, Forge Parkour and Revolution Parkour. He also trains with his 8-year-old son, who doesn't remember a time when he didn't love parkour.



SHANT JAM 2020

THE BEST PART OF THE WORST YEAR

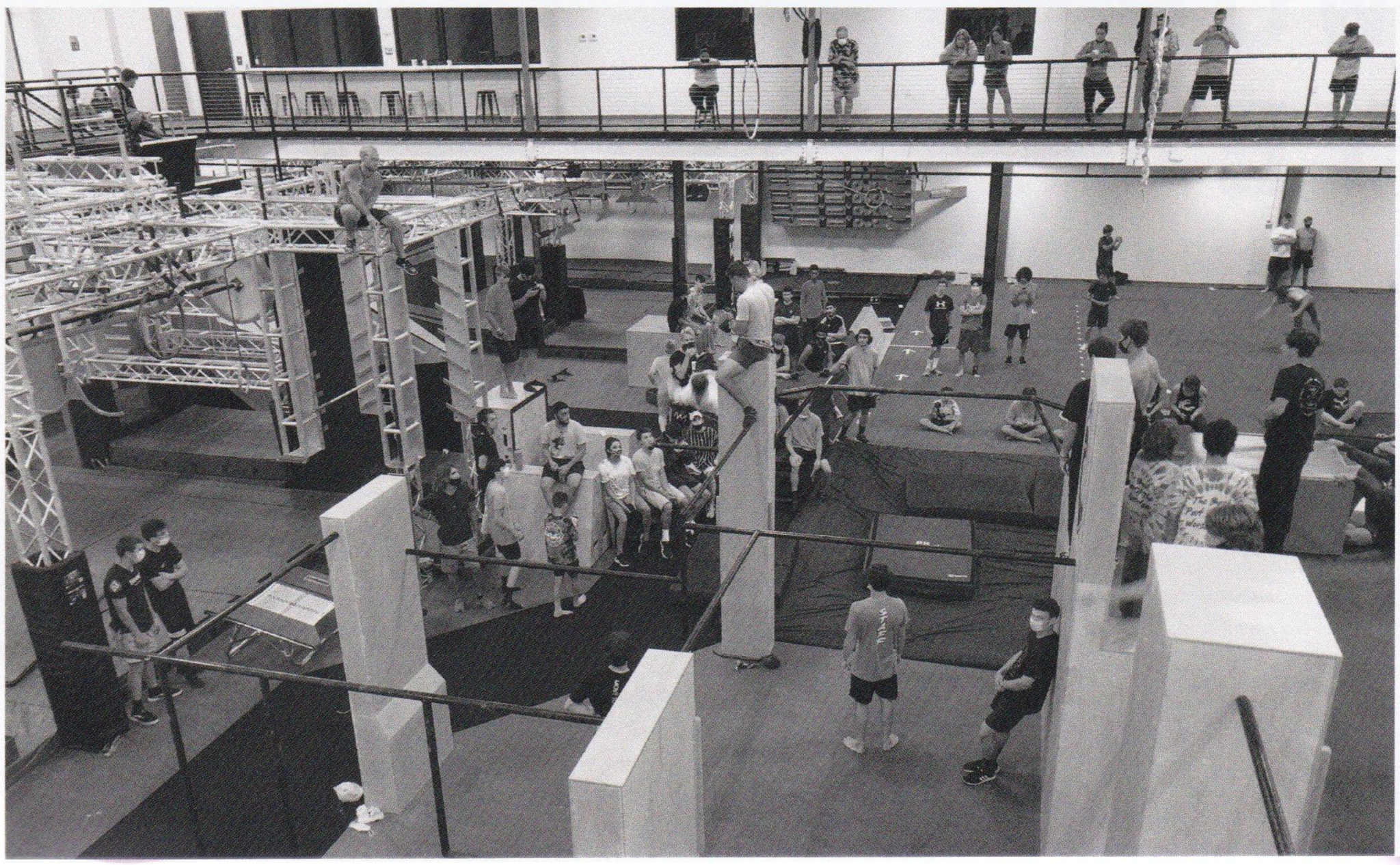
PHILIP PANHORST

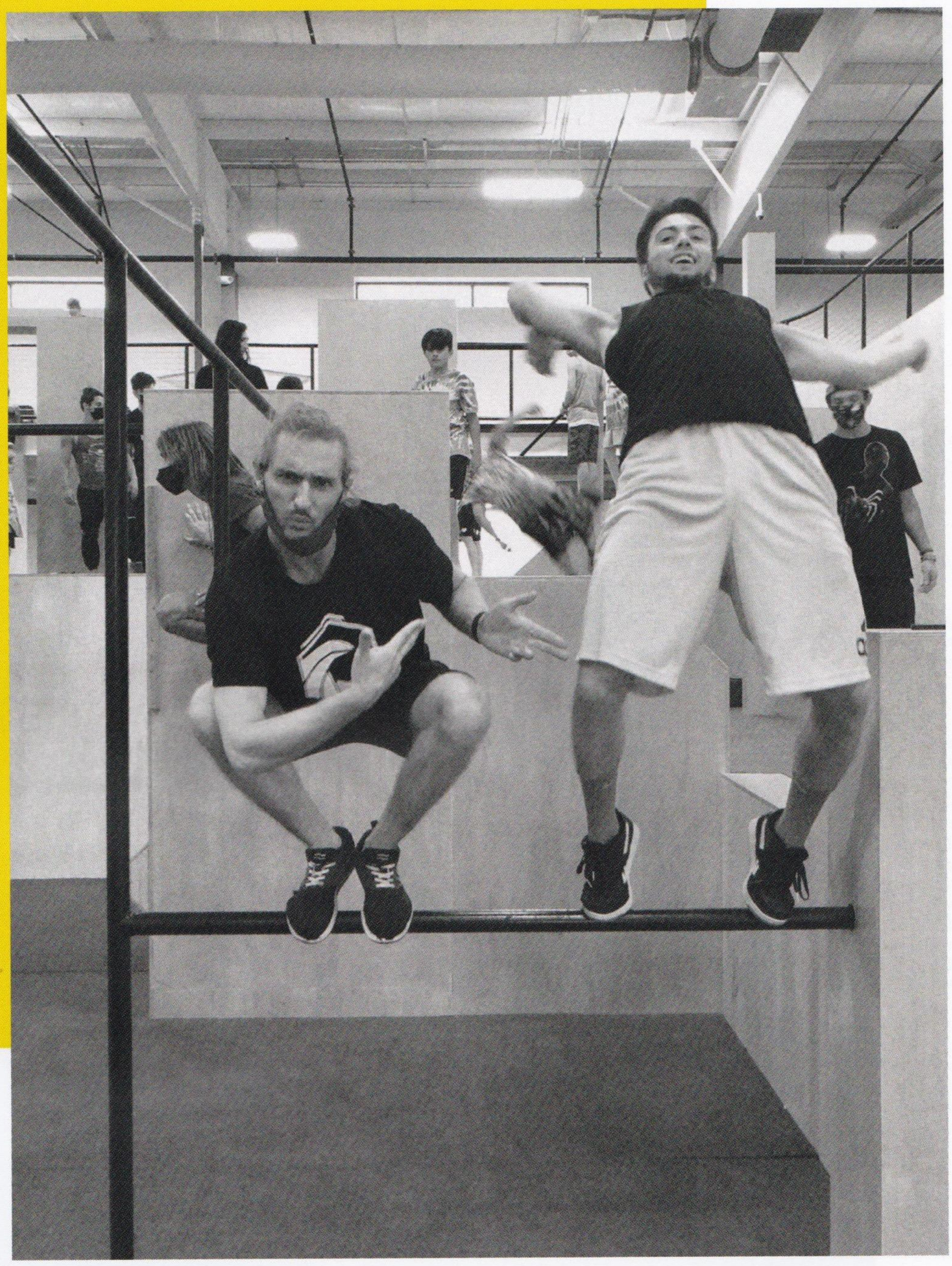
First came a pandemic, then came isolation, protests in Hong Kong, a movement for racial justice, hurricanes, fires, explosions, violence, and then in September came Shant Jam 2020. Movers from as far as Louisiana, Utah, and Wisconsin united at Motive Movement to train, talk, and throw down together.

After canceling their much-anticipated grand opening on March 21st due to the outbreak of COVID-19, gym owners Bootie Cothran, Brett Sims, Grace Sims, and Bob Reese started with a soft opening over the summer before welcoming near 160 eager athletes through their doors to finally enjoy the realization of all their hard work. After the delays, Bootie said as he watched, "That was not the ideal way to start a small business...it's nice to see people enjoying the space as it was intended." Six months of labor, hand-building all of the obstacles in the gym, and working twelve hours a day, seven days a week yielded a beautiful two-story gym with a ninja warrior course, a spacious spring floor, super tramps, and a large parkour area. "I welded all these bars. We built this wall here. We built the front desk. We laid down the carpet. We built all the furniture upstairs," Grace says, "We definitely have a lot of pride in the gym because we made it with our own hands."

Those in the line to enter looked in through the windows with excitement. "It's just great to see so many people here at this event. Like-minded people all coming together. This is what it's really all about," says Brett. For many movers present, this marked their first gathering as a community since shutdowns and social distancing took effect. People coming into the building had to pass a temperature check and wear a mask. Athletes did not have to wear masks while moving due to concerns that the masks could potentially cover their eyes.

IT'S JUST GREAT TO SEE SO MANY PEOPLE HERE AT THIS EVENT. LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE ALL COMING TOGETHER. THIS IS WHAT IT'S REALLY ALL ABOUT.



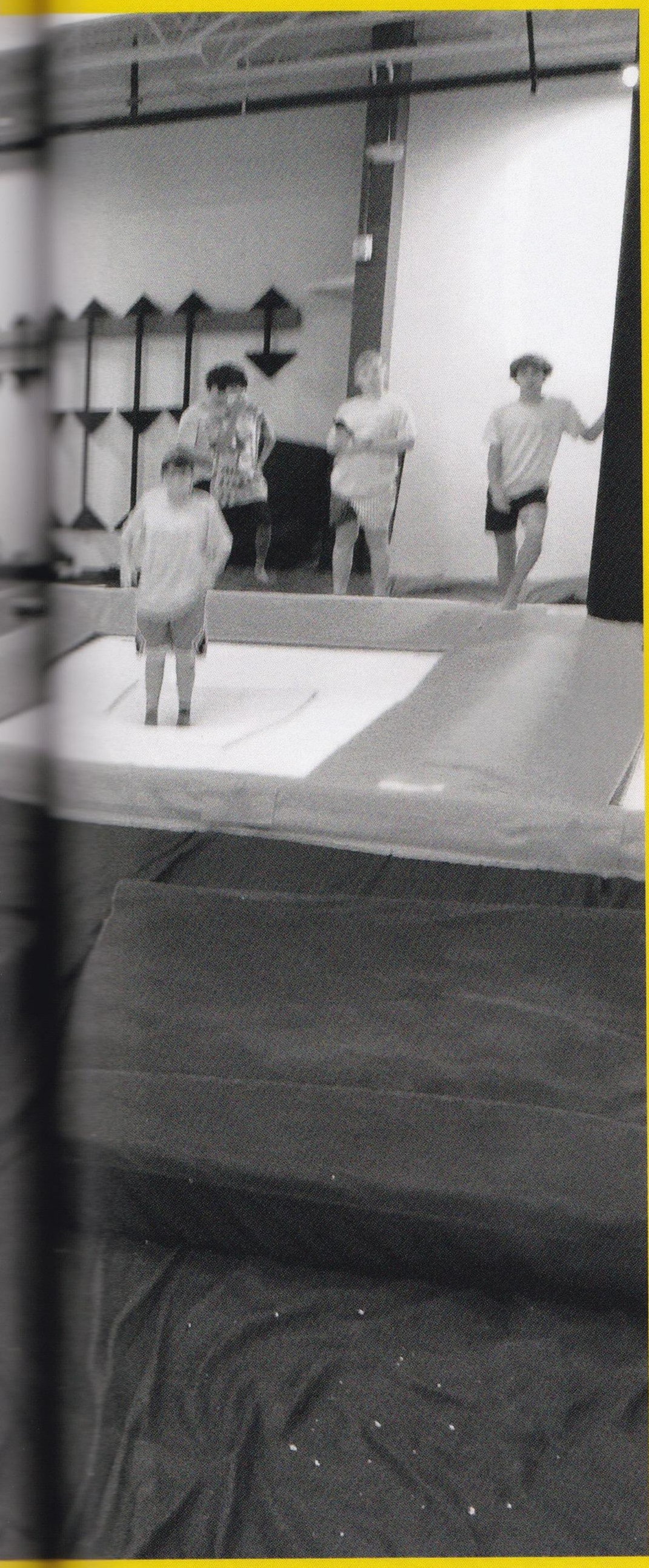


Reed Mayer was seen sharing some slick shirts for the upcoming Zephyr Movement while Calen Chan made his presence known as everyone watched him throw some of his signature moves including a kong gainer from the second story rail to the top of the tramp wall. Calen also took plenty of time to help coach many through new moves. “It feels so good to be back at a really big jam,” Calen says, “It's good to get constant reminders of why we started parkour.”

After pizza, Adam Devenport held a "bangers for merch" giveaway. Those whose lines were deemed bangers by the crowds received merch from a big bag filled with Pair of Thieves clothing. Many incredible movers gave it their best, awing the spectators with double side flips, quadruple kabooms, bar regrabs, and some high stakes sticks.

As the evening progressed, the jam transitioned to an overnight lock-in. Training continued, and a movie projector made an appearance. “Over the Hedge” played in the background as the remaining people updated social media and kept the tramps occupied. Hammocks draped across the many obstacles as night set in.

MOTIVE



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The next morning came. A few more sessions were fit in as the jam dwindled. Everyone left, perhaps a bit sore, but with many good memories, new friends, a feeling of encouragement, and a hope for more good times like this in the future. After all that came before, Shant Jam 2020 was the best part of the worst year. The movers, trickers, and athletes of the community are still here. And while we mourn the losses we have suffered this year, the movement still connects us. “We lost a lot of gyms. It was really scary to watch. I’m hoping that after COVID ends, we can build that community right back up and build even bigger and smarter and more efficient,” says Bob. “Do your best and do the things you know have the best opportunity to succeed. You have to do your best to adapt to the times, but be okay with failing,” Brett says, “Keep trying.”

After more than ten years of friendship between the owners and a gym three years in the making, Motive School of Movement is still trying. For those who wish to support the gym, Grace said, “Just come do open gym. Right now we’re open Monday through Saturday, and we’ll add on Sundays pretty soon. And Saturdays we’re open ten hours for open gym, so if you are a couple of hours away, it's still worth it to come and spend ten hours here.” As for myself, I will be back soon.

CALLED-OUT

Sofi Ward

A MISSTEP

[redacted], misunderstanding, or a malicious act, regardless of what triggered it, "calling out" has become a popular way to respond to unwanted behavior in a group. A call-out can take on many forms, from a private discussion about someone's actions, to publicly broadcasting their wrongdoing, to organizing community-wide action against them. The results are capable of bringing people together or driving them apart. As a tight-knit community interested in growth, I believe it's worth understanding the trend of call-out culture and how it potentially benefits or stunts our ability to relate to one another.

There is some logic to calling a person out. In the moment, it makes sense because you are discouraging unwanted behavior. In the long term, it motivates people to be more aware of their actions by setting consequences. But the reality of relationships means that putting someone on the spot can provoke unintended consequences, so positive change requires more than justified frustration and a spotlight.

The current call-out trend is not the first time that public shaming has been popular. From the stocks to the dunce cap, we have used shame to police ourselves throughout history. Shame even underlies most legal systems, since a guilty verdict often brings with it a social stigma that brings consequences long after incarceration. Confrontation and shame are natural mechanisms by which we self govern, but that does not mean that they are foolproof.

The most common pitfall in a call-out is oversimplifying. It's assuming that because you think someone has done something wrong, confronting that person will bring them to see things as you do. They will then beg for forgiveness, and reform themselves. The reality is that people usually react to confrontation defensively because they want to protect their existing beliefs or are afraid to be labeled evil. It makes sense when, at its most aggressive, call-outs dehumanize, shame, and ostracize their target. They become reduced to sad, terrifying examples of what happens when we cross social boundaries. That is why the gravest problem with call-out culture is when it does not allow for forgiveness and thereby hinders growth.

When people are cast from communities as a result of being called out, they can go so far as commit suicide to escape their persecution. For some, it's easier than being forever branded as a bad person. This is ethically unjust because individuals are not given a fair trial or an opportunity to reform themselves. Additionally, it cultivates fear in the rest of the collective. Such severe and swift social repercussions without a proper hearing of both sides means that ostracization could be just a misunderstanding away for anybody. It's a thought that can spread fear like wildfire. Remember witch hunts? Governed by fear, people obey cultural norms, but often performatively while casting aside empathy, exploration, and personal development. The community also begins to isolate anyone who is socially questionable, as an instinctual act by individuals to preserve themselves and avoid being damned by the association. This is not an environment of mindfulness, facilitated growth, or healing, nonetheless empowerment.

Parkour is not plagued by call-out culture-quite the opposite. There have been a few instances in which the community mobilized to denounce something publicly. Such as the appropriation of parkour by the FIG and the condemnation of the parkour athletes involved. Or when an Instagram account emerged of a female athlete that was just a sex doll getting thrown across IMAX. Or when screenshots arose of a traceur saying incredibly sexist things about a traceuse. In those instances, my feed flooded with stories and posts in disagreement. As a collective, we moved to show that that behavior was not reflective of what many of us wanted from parkour culture.

Still, we did not shun these people and let that act define their character. These people have remained active and even well-known community members. I don't know the details of their personal lives, but it seems as though their friends and the community continued to be supportive of them. Many of the people that I know of also came to apologize for their actions. There are even some who now noticeably work to help guide others through a similar ideological evolution. This type of growth is beautiful and points to a healthy dynamic between individual practitioners and the community. It shows that we can critique each other with respect and consciously work to improve our community while also maintaining healthy relationships.

Of course, there may have been a friend that stopped talking to them or abusive messages that they received, which most people can't see. But from my observations, I am proud of how our collective has evaded the worst of this dehumanizing trend. I've seen the damage an unhealthy call-out culture can cause, and I write this not because I think we are falling into that trap but so that we can continue to call-in instead of call-out and encourage personal growth instead of damning people through strict and static judgments of character. After all, we all know that we are all capable of so much more than we might expect.

[redacted] ANDREW OBENREDER

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IN PRAISE OF APPLE TREE

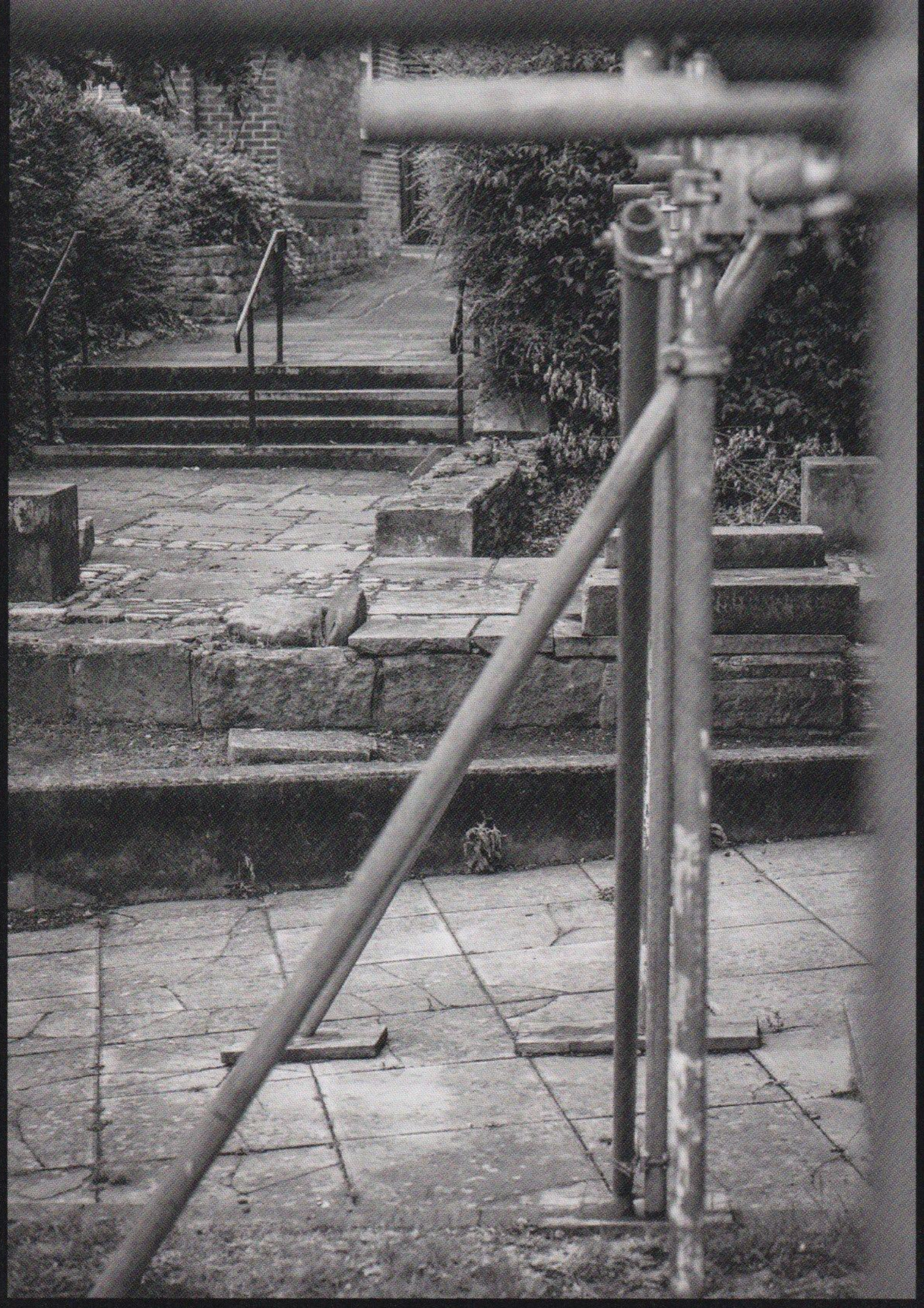
A forgotten microcosm known only to Sheffield's small parkour community.

GEORGE STARKIE

It is a scorcher of a day in the middle of a national lockdown. I am sitting in a shaded patch of grass, watching several of my friends jump between scaffolding of various heights. My knee is still injured. Delicately nestled between the ownership of several admin buildings and suburban residencies lies Apple Tree, a forgotten microcosm known only to Sheffield's small Parkour community. The spot is named after the gnarled apple tree in the center of the courtyard whose branches can be swung from and its bitter apples thrown. The spot is a favorite of many due to its simplicity, which forces a wide degree of versatility in training. But there also seems to be some kind of unspoken attribute that typifies an iconic training location such as this.

A 'spot' is loosely defined as an environment in which an individual or multiple people can train parkour. The subjectivity of this definition successfully encourages people to train at a wide variety of spots to adapt to many environments and styles of movement. But there is more to a spot than practical details. Apple Tree possesses a distinct personality, in part because of its unique conception.

Apple Tree was once the center of a dilapidated housing estate that was torn down to accommodate several unassuming university and medical buildings. It is no surprise really; the destruction of old industrial estates is a sad fact of life. However, either through lack of funds, archaic construction practices, or perhaps even the Apple Tree itself (Sheffield is, and I'm not exaggerating, violently protective of its trees and natural environments), the spot avoided subsequent redevelopment.

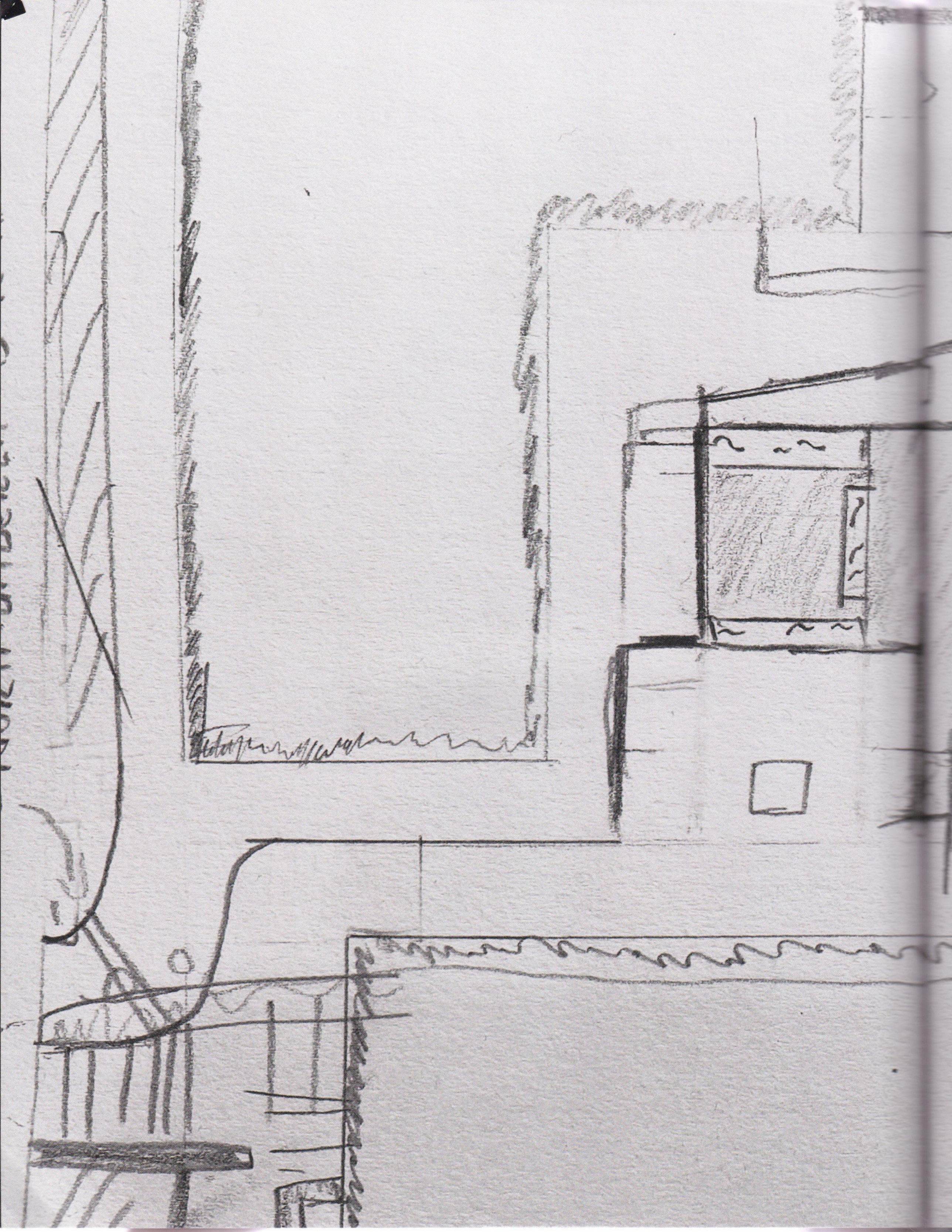


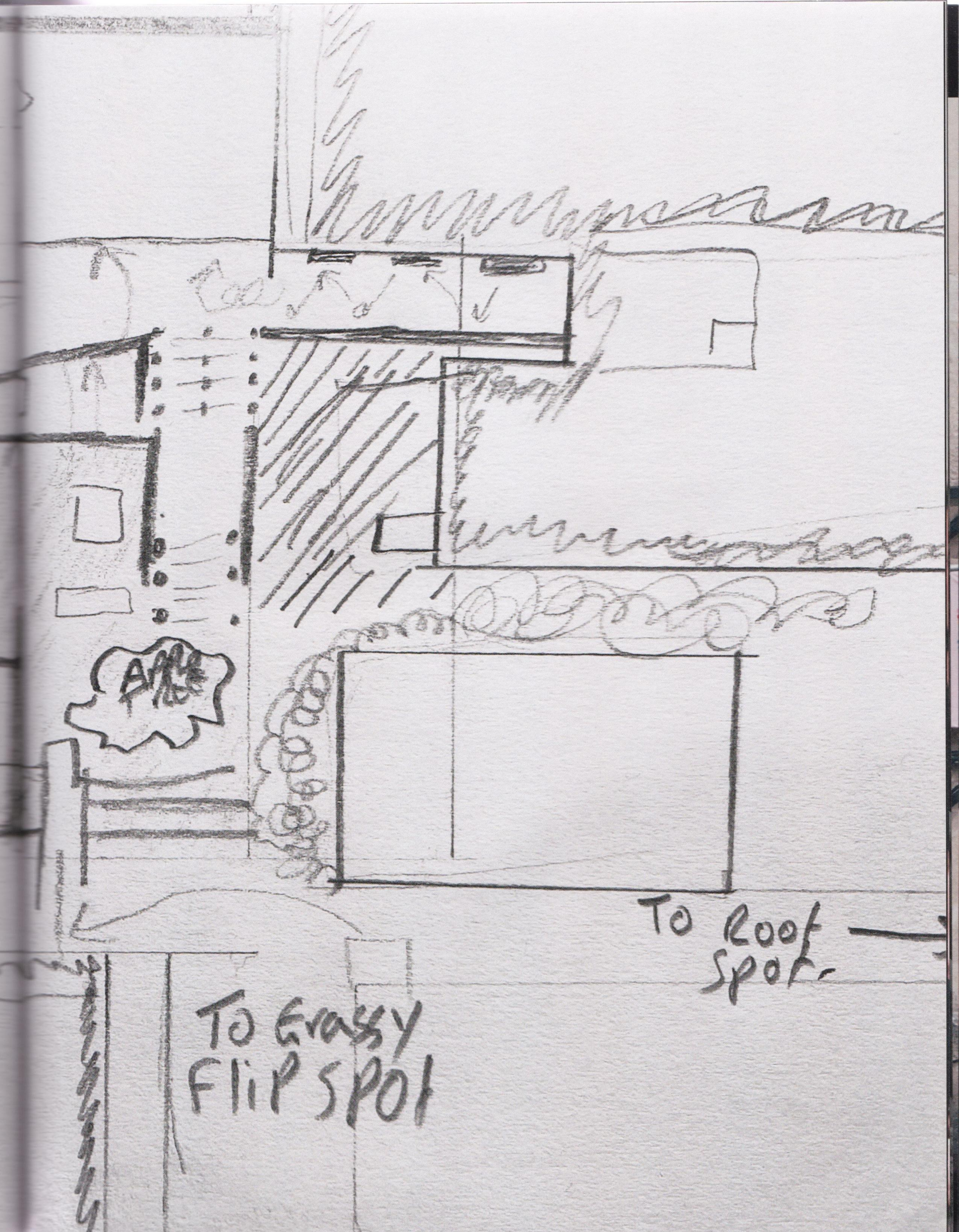
Seizing the opportunity, local traceurs somehow persuaded the university security to let them rebuild the spot, and they have since claimed unofficial ownership. Those old school legends, who did little more than crawl up and down stairs, are long gone. But by some stroke of fortune, their verbal agreement with the university faculty has more or less continued to be honored.

And this is precisely why Apple Tree is such a chaotic and mismatched conglomerate of various concrete slabs and sketchy railings arranged with childlike simplicity and putting it at odds with most other spots which must follow strict planning guidelines. Most new public infrastructure incorporates hostile design, intended to limit the functionality of an area for sports like skateboarding and parkour. The result is that these new spots are impersonal and lack any sense of community. Apple Tree's conception was organic and feels like a fitting place to train and develop just like so many others have done before. They don't make spots like they used to.

Outside of Sheffield Apple Tree is barely known, yet it is iconic. Its charm is due to its simplicity, which in effect makes it self-sustaining, to some degree. I remember spending several weeks frustratedly trying to learn how to split step my kongs when I first started training. Years later, we are still here with a fresh source of new challenges inspired by experience.

Parkour and freerunning embody the principles of minimalism, requiring only the physical self to train. However, architectural constraints on certain spots can have an undue influence on movements, stifling rather than amplifying creativity. Apple Tree reinforces this minimalist ideology by forcing you to adapt to an environment rather than simply looking for jumps. It is as simple or as complex as you make it. Iconic spots like Apple Tree, or IMAX, are just better at provoking for those unexpected moments in training in which the best parts of life are experienced.




To Roof spot
To Erasy Flip Spot

IT'S LIKE THEY DON'T

But who knows? And who even really cares, anyway? All this musing seems counterproductive. Parkour teaches you to live in the moment and find joy in the unpredictable happenings of everyday life. If I hadn't been injured, I probably wouldn't be philosophizing either, and looking around, my thoughts are confirmed in the actions of my friends, exhausted in the late afternoon sun, laughing and dancing and jumping. Tay is eyeing up a large plyo. Lorian and Dylan are incorporating the new scaffolding into a line. I'm not exactly sure what Omer is doing, but he's drenched in sweat. Marcus is practicing side flips. There's even talk of a roof mission to end the day. There's no worry about how to quantify spots or musing over parkour philosophy because right now it isn't that important. But there is something about the crumbling sandstone blocks and rotten apples on the floor-minor details I realize I will never forget. It isn't just that Apple Tree allows us to make the most of our environment. When we train here, I realize that I never want to leave.

They don't make spots like they used to. The first sight of scaffolding brought excitement at the prospect of reinvigorated training, but this instant delight hides a more sinister long-term implication.

Redevelopment. It seems like planning is well underway and I wonder if it will be this time that Apple Tree is destroyed or the next. Times are changing, the world is changing. The spot has already been altered so dramatically that I doubt a spoken promise, over ten years old, will do much to help. One day, there will be nothing left to show for it save a few fond memories and grainy video clips. Whatever happens, happens—there's no stopping that.

This summer I have gazed up at the sky more often than ever before. Freerunners spend a lot of time looking up, a lot more I reckon than most. Searching for gaps to jump across, tumbling upside down, sometimes just laying in the grass and looking up. An image of a place can be preserved in writing, but that feeling of familiarity cannot. It lingers near a new spot, waiting to be rediscovered. It was almost impossible to tell that anything was out of the ordinary. But I know that on that sultry afternoon when the world had stopped turning, I had never seen a sky so blue.

How Competition *Re*defined Parkour

Parkour's relationship with competition has been a rocky one. Dive into its history and see how competition's growth in the discipline has turned practitioners into athletes.

Max Henry

Julien Blanc

RENAISSANCE

I'd like you to take a journey with me. Close your eyes and picture this:

It's late 2006. You're bumping Rise Against on your brand new Zune and pull up the .NET forums to check the latest in parkour news. The IMAX walls are orange, Kalenji Success has a monopoly on the parkour shoe market, and people get hate mail for tagging videos of flips with the word "parkour"…times are good. Suddenly, your eyes narrow on a new thread. It reads "Rumours of a Red Bull Parkour Competition."

For much of the 2000s, a large block of parkour practitioners were outspoken critics of competition. Some saw it as a threat to the integrity of the sport, a stance inherited from the Yamakasi. Others felt ostracized by competition and the constant weighing and measuring that characterized mainstream sport. A few just thought competitions were lame. No matter where you fell on the spectrum, in 2006 it would have been hard to find many major players in the international community speaking out in favor of competition. But that didn't mean they weren't there.

When Red Bull announced the world's first freerunning competition in 2007, it came as a huge surprise. Until then, no one had expressed serious interest in holding a competition - especially not a brand name like Red Bull. In reality, Red Bull hadn't been expecting it either. Earlier that year, a group of Austrian freerunners led by Nico Wlcek had approached them about team sponsorship. They weren't in the business of sponsoring groups, especially not in a relatively unknown sport, but when Nico asked if they'd be willing to sponsor an event, Red Bull's ears perked up.

They decided a competition would be the best return on investment. The athlete list was put together; a small but talented group from teams like Urban Freeflow, Tempest, and Air Wipp. They represented the younger, edgier side of the community at the time and were among the few willing to attach their names and image to a Red Bull competition. Their involvement, and the overall atmosphere of the event, did little to assuage the community's initial fears. The graffiti-spattered course was littered with thick mats. Athletes played to the crowd while throwing themselves around with reckless abandon. Ryan Doyle was awarded first place after shattering his leg on a double cork. From the outside looking in, Red Bull's Art of Motion epitomized the young, adrenaline-fueled image of parkour that practitioners had been fighting to avoid.

For those who participated, the experience was different. They saw a major company collaborating with parkour athletes for the first time to create something that had never been done. They watched the Red Bull team improvise and adapt to their feedback as the event unfolded. They saw the athletes working together to create judging criteria and design a course. They felt the camaraderie and support that followed Ryan as he left the event on a stretcher. The participants saw its potential and wanted to invest in it.

After the first Art of Motion, Urban Freeflow quickly secured support from Barclaycard to host a freerunning competition in London. The Barclaycard World Freerunning Championship in 2008 was very similar to the Art of Motion, with one important exception - competitors were judged by their peers. Each athlete received a score from his (and it was just his at the time) fellow competitors. This egalitarian voting system was as an olive branch to the anti-competitive factions in the parkour community, and also a message: the fact we're competing doesn't mean we can't also highlight parkour's values.

Sadly, UF's radical change was overshadowed by issues that haunted all early parkour competitions - mats on the course, event marketing, and atmosphere showcasing parkour's "extreme" side, and a gnarly bail during the first run of the night. The competition took three hours to run, and when it came time for the second Barclaycard WFC in 2009 the peer-judging system was cut - in part to save time. While this was a significant loss, the 2009 event did take steps to encourage athlete safety. After removing mats and upping the importance of execution in the judging criteria, athletes had far less incentive to throw moves they couldn't land consistently.

The 2009 Barclaycard WFC (and subsequent AOM in Sweden) also represented a much wider cross-section of the community. Athletes from Australia, Brazil, and Mexico competed, as did two up-and-coming freerunners named Jason Paul and Pasha. It seemed competition in parkour was spreading, and with this next generation of athletes the game would start to change.

REVOLUTION

How do you judge athletes in a sport where anything goes? What should we expect of athletes who have never been asked to compete? These were questions facing the team that put together the first parkour competitions. It was a serious challenge and they looked to other sports for help. Gymnastics seemed like an obvious place to start, but gymnasts compete utilizing the same routines on the same equipment every time. Parkour was spot-dependent and relied much more on an athlete's ability to put together a line the day before a competition. This was closer to street sports like skateboarding or BMX, and that's where these original parkour comps got their inspiration. In skateboarding, "Runs" competitions give athletes a minute on the course to create a line that strings together some of their best tricks. They're judged for the difficulty of the tricks, how they're executed, and how smoothly they're able to put them together. Sound familiar?

Drawing so heavily from another sports' criteria ended up creating a few problems. The first one was the time limit. No one knew the stamina of parkour athletes at the time. It had never been tested! It turned out that a minute was far too long. Athletes in the late 2000s were barely able to link three or four movements smoothly in competition, let alone put together 45 to 60-second lines. As a result, competitors tried to catch their breath and fill time with poses, "flow" moves, and lots of hyping up the audience. This left a bad taste in the mouth of traditionalists who hated the self-glorifying aspect of competition. The time limit and "hype factor" also unintentionally encouraged participants to throw hard tricks when they were the most fatigued. Everyone knew finishing with a bang left a great impression, so athletes started throwing moves they weren't fully confident in at times when their bodies were most compromised. The result? Lots of injuries, which anti-competitive traceurs jumped on as a sign from the PK Gods to stop comps forever.

The second issue was weighing value. No one, athletes or judges, knew how to weigh flow vs. difficulty vs. execution vs. creativity.

In early events, difficulty was given top priority - Ryan Doyle won the first AOM and was carted off the course. As injuries piled up over the next few years, the balance shifted toward execution. By 2011, you couldn't expect to win if you took a serious bail on your run. But this created other issues. Athletes started to play it safe and sacrifice flow and difficulty to ensure a safer, cleaner run. From an audience perspective, this made the event less fun to watch. The judges noticed, and in the early 2010s flow started to become more and more important.

This coincided with a spike in ability among participants. By the time Red Bull moved AOM to Santorini in 2012, most of the top-tier athletes had been competing for at least three or four years. They'd begun to gear their training, consciously or unconsciously, toward competition criteria and it showed. Athletes were moving non-stop through the course, and starting to connect moves that a few years earlier could have won them Sickest Trick. Compare Pasha's 2009 Art of Motion run to his winning run in 2012. The format, which had started as arbitrary criteria adapted from another sport, had started to make its mark on the athletes.

Around the same time that veteran athletes were growing comfortable with the judging, Red Bull Art of Motion introduced their video qualifier. This, combined with Instagram's upgrade to 15-second videos in 2013, was a game-changer for the parkour-style community. While the video qualifier was intended as a way to select talented athletes from around the world, its greater contribution was incentivizing those athletes to tweak their training. All of a sudden, everyone was focused on flow and line-building. In the process of filming their AOM run, athletes also improved their stamina and consistency on hard tricks. While this didn't always translate to success in the competition, it massively raised the bar for anyone who hoped to do well. Compare again the winning run from 2012 to the highlight reel from the 2017 Art of Motion. Not only had athletes improved their flow, but they were also throwing down vastly more difficult moves with much better execution. Part of this was the training bump that video qualifiers had introduced. Another factor was the growing popularity of single line Instagram clips which had encouraged athletes to throw together 10 to 15-second lines in their training. But the greatest factor was probably the rise of grassroots competitions.

RISE

While Art of Motion was defining the European competitive scene, a stalwart of the North American community started to develop a unique format. Unlike AOM, which was thrown together by parkour athletes to mesh with the vision of Red Bull, the seedling that became Sport Parkour League was created by practitioners to highlight parkour's diversity. Instead of forcing athletes to adapt their training to the event, the team at Origins Parkour in Vancouver developed their format to showcase what people trained.

The first major change that SPL introduced were categories. Instead of running a freestyle-only event, SPL split their competition into Speed, Skill, and Style. For years, practitioners had complained that events like AOM did little to highlight parkour's non-acrobatic side. Someone like Callum Powell, who helped create a lot of parkour's most memorable content from 2008 onward, just wouldn't cut it in AOM. SPL decided a major overhaul was in order. A speed event would cover the efficiency side of parkour training. Skill would test athletes' power, confidence, and control on single challenges. And Style would draw from AOM while making a few changes of its own.

Where flow, difficulty, execution, and creativity had often fluctuated in importance over the years at AOM, the SPL team decided from the start to emphasize flow. A short, well-planned run was rewarded far more under this new criteria than a run that meandered but incorporated more tricks. As a result, run time dropped from AOM's 30 to 45-second average to about 15 seconds of non-stop movement. This fostered stronger line building and gave the audience (and parkour community) a better show. SPL also decided to add a second round to their Style format: Big Trick.

In the 2010s, a handful of athletes helped grow AOM's popularity by pushing difficulty. While they often got respect from the community and audience, the format didn't lend itself to athletes who specialized in single tricks. Alfred Scott, who threw several "world's firsts" onto concrete during AOM, is a good example. To give athletes like this a shot at the podium, SPL decided to add a "Big Trick" round for anyone who made it through the first round of runs. This turned out to be a great idea, not only for the competition but for the growth of the community.

Since 2015, SPL's Big Trick round has hosted many of the sport's most iconic competitive moments. Let's go down the list quickly:

2015 - Zen Shimada and Dante Grazioli went triple-for-triple in a battle to see who would be the first to land triple cork on hard ground.

2016 - Nate Weston changed the flip pre game around the world with standing side rail pre to double flyaway. Alfred Scott came close to winning with double flyaway precision to a vault box.

2017 - Joey Adrian stomped kong gainer full, while Bob Reese threw vortex side full and Nate once again stuck a nasty side rail pre.

2018 - Max Antal broke onto the global scene with scoot full-in, then collectively smashed everyone's mind in…

2019 - When Max hit double side pre to a near stick.

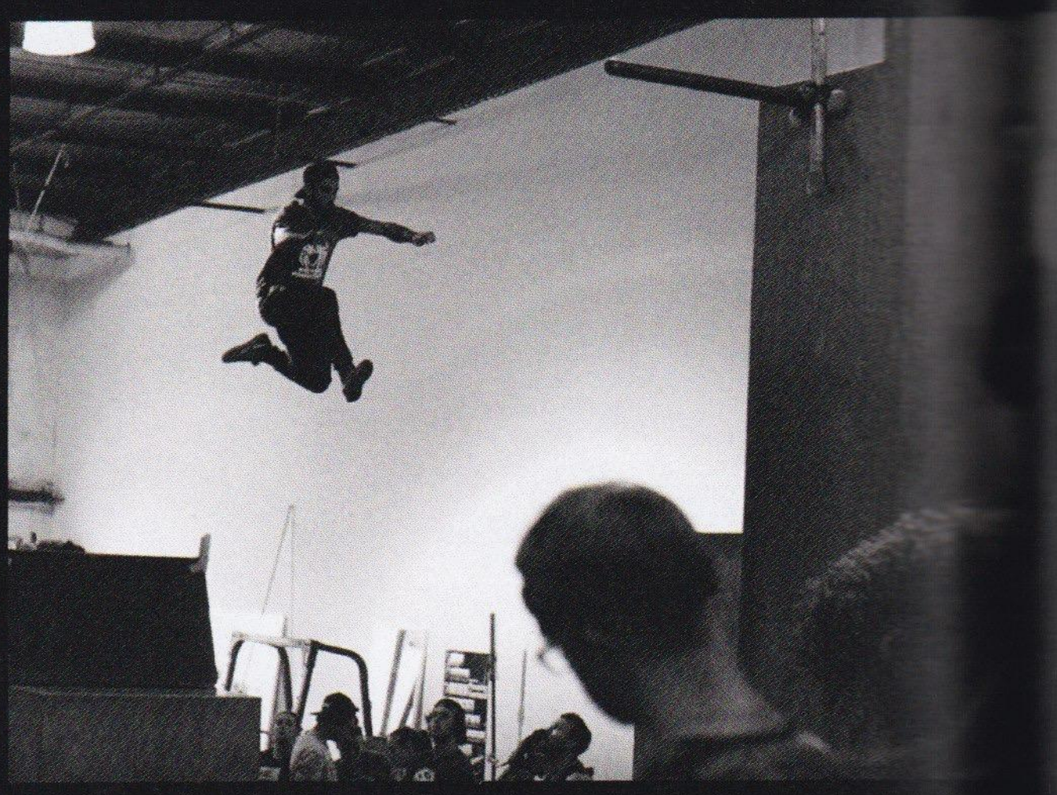
And all of this happened after these athletes put together next-level lines to get through the first round. In most sports, competition is where you see big moments happen. It wasn't really until the implementation of Big Trick at SPL comps that we saw this develop in parkour's competitive scene. And it wasn't just Style. Athletes were also changing the game in Speed and Skill.

When APEX Movement, Parkour Visions, and a handful of other gyms started running speed events in the early 2010s, they were full of poor route-planning, missteps, and silly injuries. With the growing popularity of Ninja Warrior, the group of parkour practitioners and fans interested in speed events started to climb. With more practice, athletes started to improve. And with improvements in athlete performance came improved in course design.

SPL decided in 2014 to switch to a flag system. Instead of funneling athletes down a set course, using flags opened the course to a variety of routes and gave athletes ways to play to their strengths. These later courses created options for rapid ascents and descents, tight threading maneuvers, and technical footwork at height. Athletes not only had to be fast, but they also had to be consistent, smart, and proficient at a wide variety of parkour skills. The increased diversity and technicality helped distance parkour speed events from the now-ubiquitous Ninja Warrior and Spartan Race-style courses. Speed parkour had come into its own.

But some practitioners still weren't satisfied. One of the most satisfying and impressive parts of parkour lies in the ability to find, pick apart, and complete a challenge. With SPL's introduction of the Skill event, this final piece of the competitive parkour puzzle fell into place.

To athletes who have competed, Skill without question feels the most similar to a training session or jam. SPL's decision to include a category revolving around single challenges was revolutionary. Drawing inspiration from similar formats in bouldering, athletes had limited attempts to complete incredibly difficult challenges. To keep the criteria for completion high, judges also raised their standards. Athletes who paused between catbacks, or used extra swings to build momentum on a lache, would receive an "incomplete" for the challenge. Small pauses or hesitations that before went unnoticed had now become a vital part of completing the challenge. Much like AOM's effect on line-building, this has changed how and what athletes train.



Red Bull
ART OF MOTION
ITALIA

REPRESENT

SPL and APEX had another contribution to make, and that was encouraging the growth of the female competitive scene. In 2016, APEX International decided to distribute prize money equally between male and female competitors. Both organizers and competitors saw this as a major step to promote visibility within the community for female athletes. SPL has also done a fantastic job of showcasing female athletes in the sport. They were the first major competitive circuit to have a women's division, and still provide the largest, most competitive event for female athletes in the world.

Following in the footsteps of APEX and SPL, the Air Wipp Challenge - based in Sweden - ran both Women's and Youth divisions in addition to Men's at their events in 2017 and 2018. This provided a phenomenal platform for up-and-coming athletes like Elise Bickley, Lilou Ruel, Stefan Dollinger, and Elis Torhall. Both Lilou and Stefan went on to qualify for the most recent Red Bull Art of Motion in 2019, and all four athletes seem posed to do well whenever competition season resumes at the end of 2020 or the beginning of 2021.

While COVID-19 has killed live events so far in 2020, it has also spurred the growth of online competitions. These online competitions have proven so far to be a great leveler for the parkour community. Without the need for Visas or travel money, athletes from the Middle East, South America, and Asia have been dominating the polls. The Tempest and Fight or Flight Instagram competitions have helped introduce dozens of new athletes to the international community - athletes who otherwise may never have gotten the chance to compete against their European and North American counterparts.

It has also helped boost visibility for the women's competitive scene. Not only has the women's community thrown together impressive lines, but they've also shown just how large the talent pool is. The first Tempest bracket to offer equal prize money for women resulted in 70+ submissions - nearly as many as the men. In subsequent months, we have seen pages like @parkourwomen pop up to share content from all the amazing athletes bursting onto the scene. It bodes well for the future of parkour to see how many of these top-notch submissions come from girls under the age of 16.

IN REVIEW

Whether we like it or not, competition has become a major part of parkour culture and has a legitimate impact on how people view our sport. Events like the Origins Pro and Red Bull Art of Motion have shown over the years that they are willing to adapt to the needs of the parkour community. As a result, the positive impact they've had on parkour's image has far outweighed the negative - particularly when you take a look back and see how far we've come!

Moving forward, we must continue to hold events and organizations accountable. With the growing involvement of FIG (International Gymnastics Federation) in competitive parkour, this has become particularly relevant. The postponement of the Olympics and other major competitions has given our community some breathing room before parkour's tentative debut as a gymnastics discipline in Paris 2024. We should all use this time to assess not only our training but the state of the culture and competitions we support. The growth of AOM has given us a firsthand look at how community involvement can improve a competition. Hopefully, those members of the community who are working with FIG on behalf of parkour can learn from Red Bull's collaboration.

For those who worry about FIG's involvement, continue to strengthen the sport in ways you feel comfortable with. Grassroots events like the Origins Pro can only change the way the world sees parkour if they're reaching the world, and that requires a massive investment of time and energy from the parkour community.

At the same time, we should continue to tinker with events online and closer to home. Help create the community you want to see by getting involved. Support the growing international and women's community by voting or submitting for online events. The gradual evolution of competitive parkour is happening as we speak, and we can all be a part of it. The more hands and voices that get involved, the more honestly we will be able to convey our sport's values to the world. So speak up-your voice matters.

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MÜV ORIGINAL

Originals

OVERSIZED DROP SHOULDER W/ RIBBED

TRACE & DESTROY

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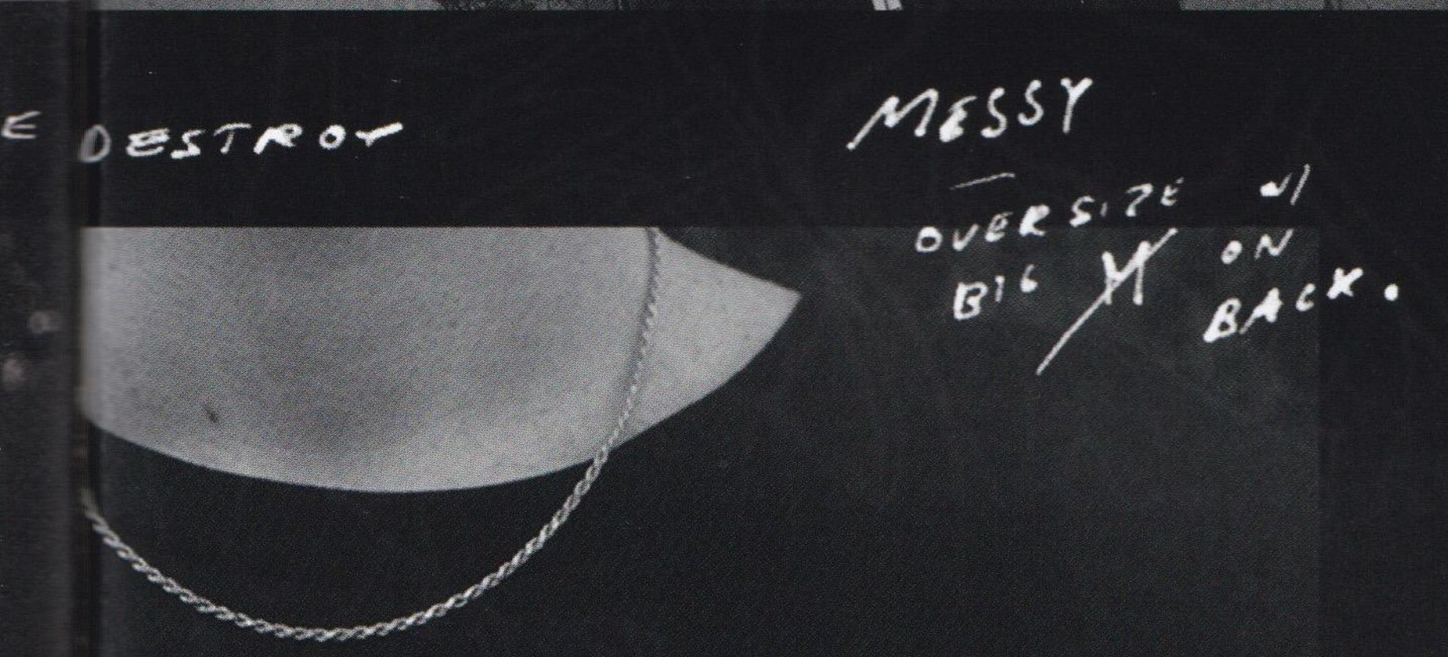
THE ORIGINAL
PARKOUR CULTURE
MAGAZINE

AVAILABLE IN BLACK + WHITE

W/ DROP SHOULDER



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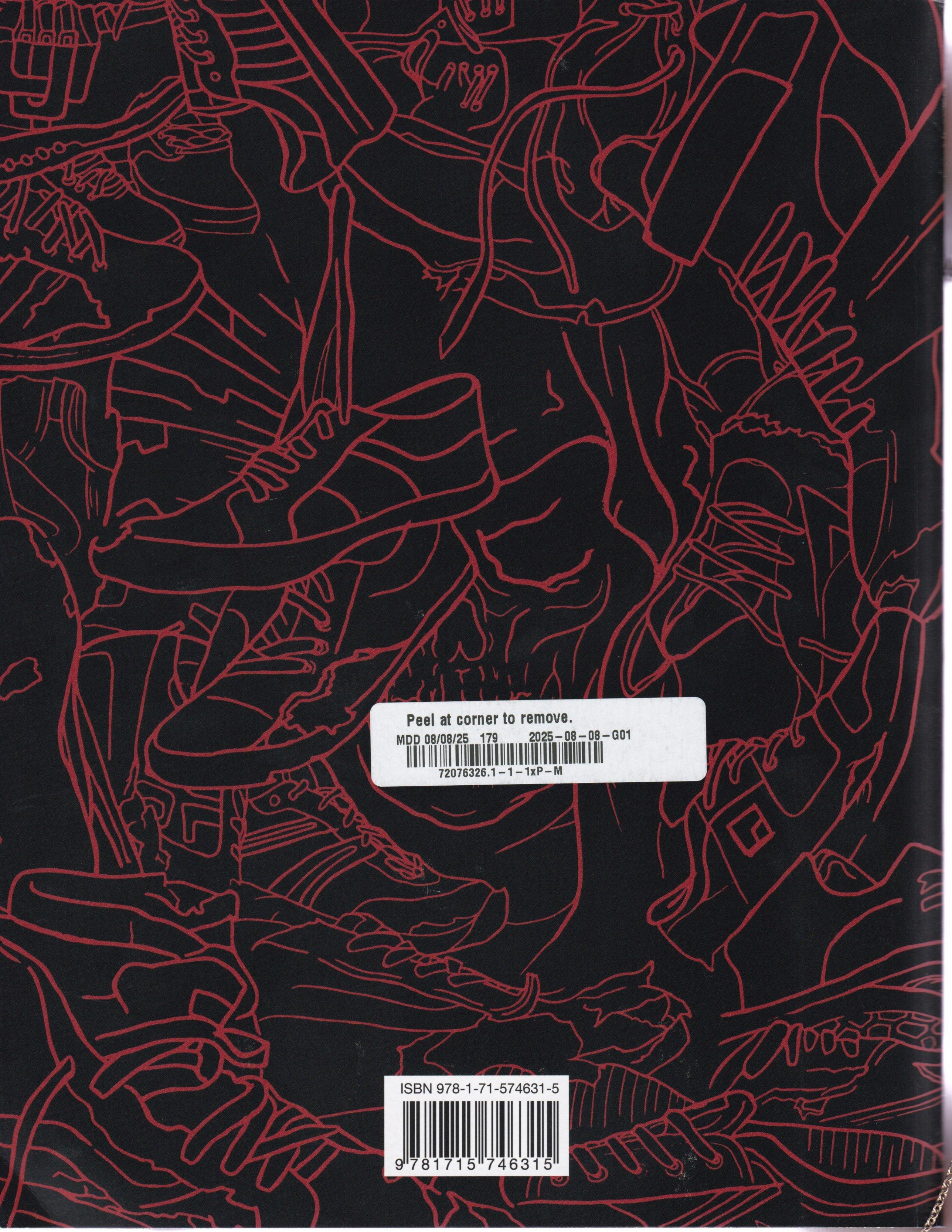

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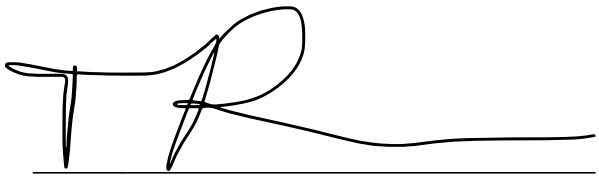

signed by: Trystan Puckhaber
CEO and Board Representative
10/17/2025